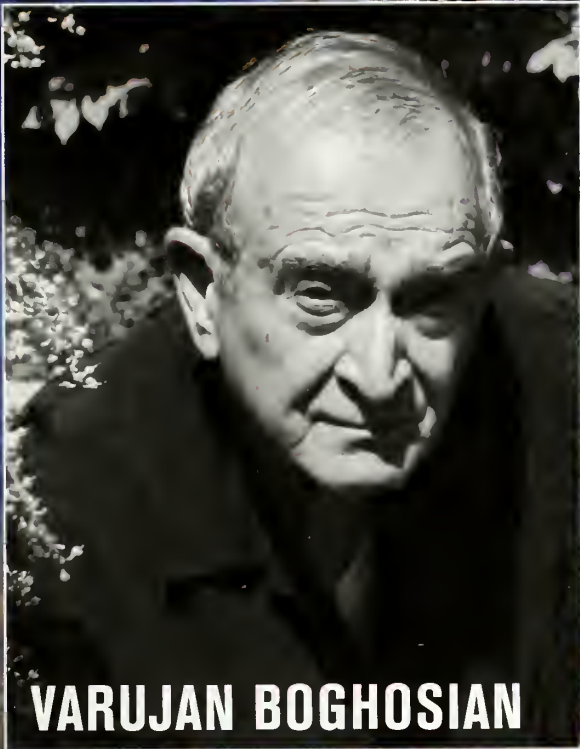


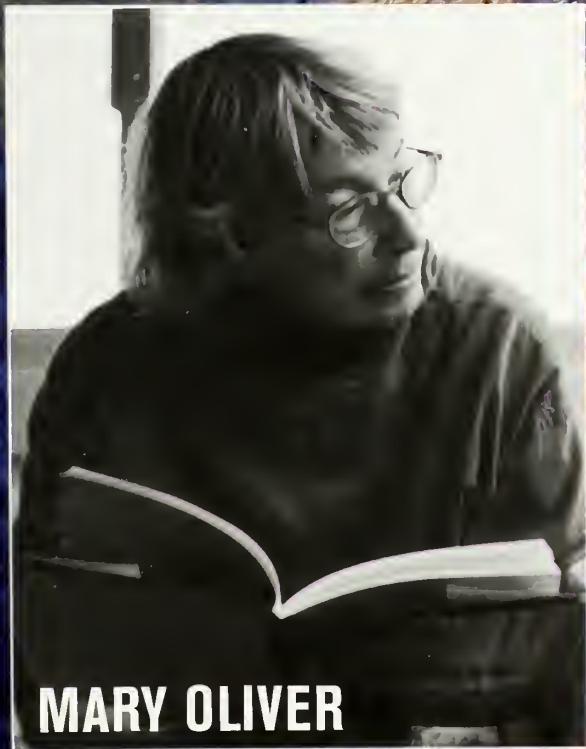
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Lili Taylor as Christine Mannon, *Mourning Becomes Electra*, 2009 © Amy Arbus

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Varujan Boghosian (detail)

May 22 - June 14

- **20/20: OUR EYE ON PROVINCETOWN ART**
Celebrating our 20th Anniversary with a 20-year overview of artists and theme exhibitions. 20% of profits will be divided between PROVINCETOWN ART ASSOCIATION AND MUSEUM and FINE ARTS WORK CENTER.

June 19 - July 5

- **NANCY WHORF**
- **MASTER DRAWINGS:**
Dickinson, Knaths, Hartley, Hawthorne, Hofmann, Hopper, Lazzell, Maril, Maurer, Moffett, Weinrich

Walker's Wonders Gallery

- **"A Fishing Story"** — group show to benefit the annual Blessing of the Fleet festivities, plus watercolors by **Julia Whorf Kelly**



Gilbert Franklin



Selina Trieff



Sky Power



Paul Resika



Herman Maril

July 10 - July 26

- **The Vevers Family:**
Elspeth Halvorsen, Tony Vevers, Tabitha Vevers
- **SALVATORE DEL DEO**

July 31 - August 16

- **SKY POWER**
- **GILBERT FRANKLIN**
- **HERMAN MARIL**

August 21 - September 7

- **PAUL RESIKA**
- **VARUJAN BOGHOSIAN**, In collaboration with Varujan Boghosian's exhibition at Provincetown Art Association and Museum, 7/24 - 8/30
- **CHARLES W. HAWTHORNE**



Nancy Whorf

September 18 - October 18

- **SELINA TRIEFF & ROBERT HENRY**
Celebrating these amazing artists awarded with Lifetime Achievement Awards from both the Arts Foundation of Cape Cod (April) and the Provincetown Art Association and Museum (Gala Event, October 10)



Elspeth Halvorsen



Varujan Boghosian



Blanche Lazzell



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2009 Hudson D. Walker Summer Gallery Schedule

Becky Slemmons, 2008 Maryland Institute Resident

May 1 to 12, Opening Friday, May 1

2009-10 Visual Arts Fellows

May 15 to 26, Opening Friday, May 15

FAWC Former Fellows: 1995-96

Curated by Janice Redman

May 29 to June 16, Opening Friday, May 29

Sponsored by Wequassett Resort and Golf Club

The Bins

Curated by John Dowd

June 19 to July 7, Opening Friday, June 19

browser, inter-actor, co-author, producer, nomad

FAWC Former Fellows **Ellen Driscoll, Adam Frellin,**

Maryalice Johnston, Michael McKean,

Minako Shirakura, and Grace Sullivan

Curated by Lauren Ewing

July 10 to 28, Opening Friday, July 10

33rd Annual Auction Exhibition

Gallery viewing - July 31 to August 14

Opening Friday, July 31, Auction, August 15

2009 Ohio Arts Council Visual Arts Resident

August 17 to 26, Opening Friday, August 21

All Opening Receptions are from 6 to 8 in the Hudson D. Walker Gallery

Each summer FAWC brings nationally recognized artists and writers to Provincetown for artist talks and readings.

All free and open to the public.

Please view our schedule of summer events online at FAWC.org/events.

Please come!



The Bins, from the Fine Arts Work Center photo archives (now the Stanley Kunitz Common Room)



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EXHIBITIONS

Hans Hofmann and His Students

Richard Meier Architecture | Auction Previews | Art of the Garden
Varujan Boghosian | Pat de Groot | Anne Peretz | Tabitha Vevers
PAAM Collection | Members 12 x 12 Silent Auction, Members Juried

...and more!

EVENTS

PAAM Consignment Auctions: June 13 and September 19

12th Annual Secret Garden Tour: July 12

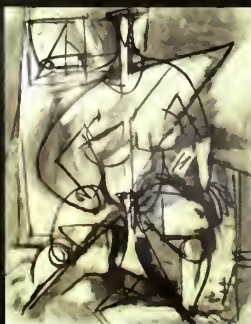
Adele and Lester Heller Memorial Lectures | Fredi Schiff Levin Lecture Series

filmArt@PAAM | Dick Miller & Friends Jazz | Bart Weisman & Guests Jazz

Blue Door Chamber Music concerts | Gala, PAAM Circle, special events ...and more!

The Lillian Orlowsky / William Freed MUSEUM SCHOOL at PAAM

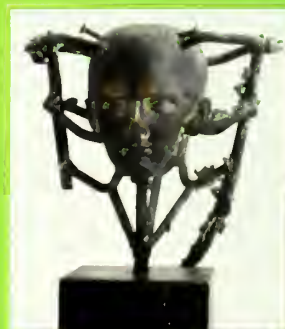
Over seventy workshops to choose from June—September.



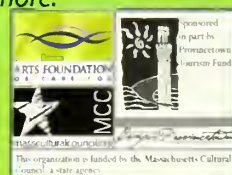
Lillian Orlowsky



Anne Peretz



Varujan Boghosian



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Refreshments At Sea, 1982, oil on canvas, 36 x 48"



Beached, 1975, oil on paper, 12 1/2" x 18"



Dark Pines, 1967, oil on canvas, 36 x 47"

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June 5-June 17 ~ opening Friday, June 5, 6-8pm

James Bakker, Barbara Cohen, Jenny Humphreys

Early Provincetown Art: Work by Frank Carson, Oliver Chaffee, Dorothy Lake Gregory, Doris Lindo Lewis, William Littlefield, and Dorothy Loeb

June 19-July 1 ~ opening Friday, June 19, 6-8pm

Molly Anathan, Diane Shumway, Richard E. Smith

Early Provincetown Art: Work by Dorothy Lake Gregory

BIG PARTY for Richard (coming from California), Molly and Diane

July 3-15 ~ opening Friday, July 3, 6-8pm

Donna Dodson, Fawn Potash, Rob Westerberg

Early Provincetown Art: Work from private collections

July 17-29 ~ opening Friday, July 17, 6-8pm

Didier Corallo, Sterck/Rozo and Gallery Artists

Early Provincetown Art: Work from private collections

July 31-August 12 ~ opening Friday, July 31, 6-8pm

Tasha Depp, Lorrie Fredette, Suzanne Harding, Patti Tronolone

Early Provincetown Art: Work from private collections

August 14-26 ~ opening Friday, August 14, 6-8pm

Tamar Cohen, Alicia Henry, Leslie Gillette Jackson, Bill Liebeskind

Early Provincetown Art: Work from private collections

August 28-September 9 ~ opening Friday, August 28, 6-8pm

Daniel Cleary, Kevin McDermott, Wendelin Glatzel

Early Provincetown Art: Work from private collections

September 11-23 ~ opening Friday, September 11, 6-8pm

Anne Goldberg, Virginia Luppino, Ewa Nogiec, Lisa Ventre

Early Provincetown Art: Work from private collections

September 25-October 7 ~ opening Friday, September 25, 6-8pm

Terry Rozo "Bad Girls on Wheels" and Kevin Mullaney "Horses"

October 9-21 ~ opening Friday, October 9, 6-8pm

The Sisterhood of Gallery Ehva & Girlfriends [Women's Week]

October 23-November 18 ~ opening Friday, October 23, 6-8pm

Dance with Me" Gallery Artists Group Exhibition

November 20-December 29 ~ opening Friday, November 20, 6-8pm

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Provincetown Art Fair / August 22-23

Harbor Lights, Long Point Light Installation / September 11

All Saints' Day, Candle Lighting, Cemetery / November 1

Thanksgiving Dinner at the Gallery / November 26

World AIDS Day / December 1

New Year's Eve Bonfire on the Beach / December 31

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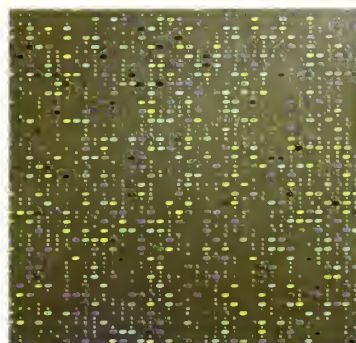
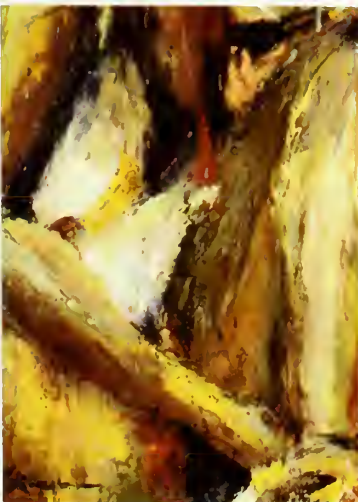
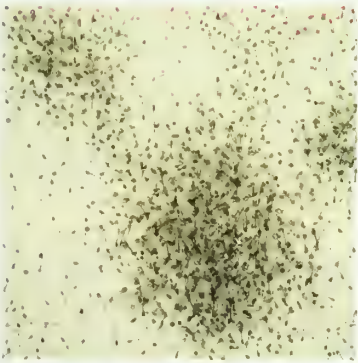
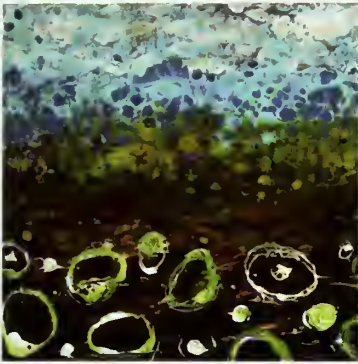
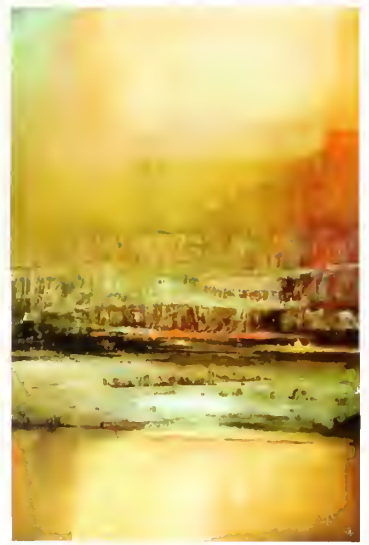
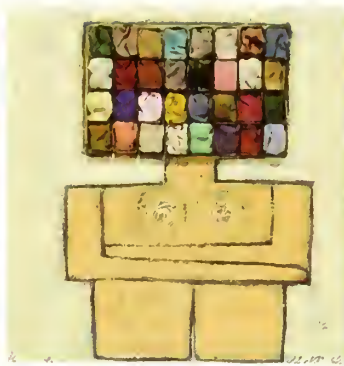
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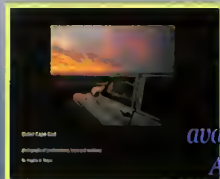
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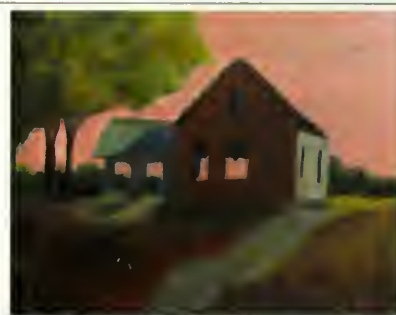
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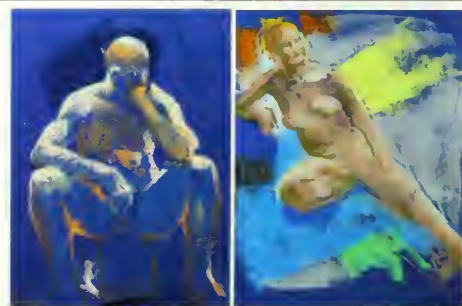
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PHOTOGRAPHS
BY GEORGE HIROSE

Preface by Christopher Busa,
Introduction by
Norman Mailer



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—Norman Mailer,
from the Introduction

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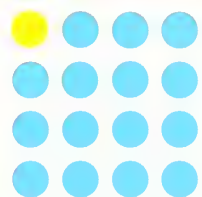
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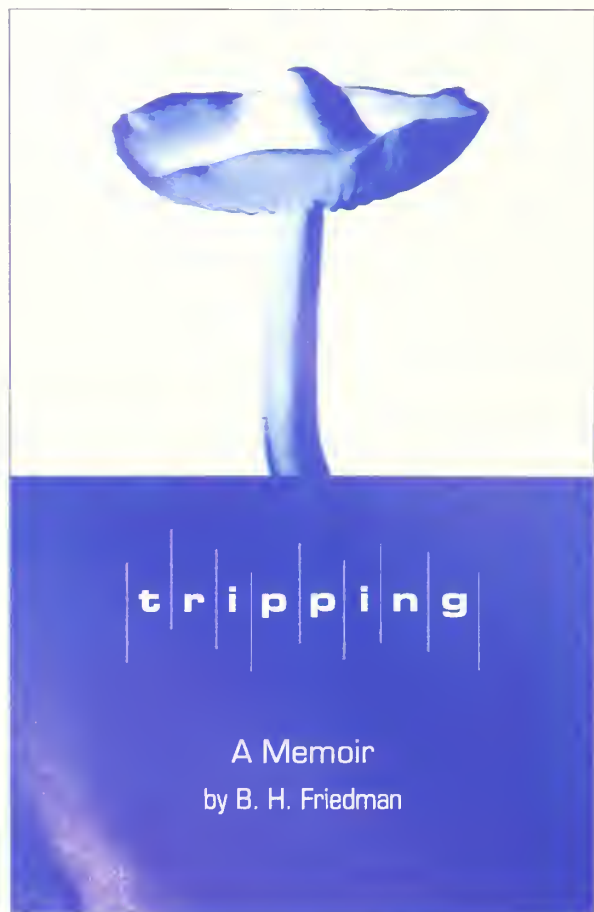


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MY CASE RESTS BY B. H. FRIEDMAN

Antonio Cristoforo Baldini, aka Tony Baldwin, is born in New York's Little Italy in 1928 to an immigrant family on the fringes of organized crime. Tony, good-looking and a talented singer, romanticizes the dangerous lives of his brothers. Upon their violent deaths he turns away from the past, landing the lead in a Broadway musical, and falling in love with its wealthy producer, Priscilla Poyncroft Porter. However, Tony's charmed life, and his marriage, soon begin to unravel, and he finds himself drawn to a mysterious, matchstick violin made by a prisoner, and to his memories of the seductive lives of his brothers. His past, and present, begin to catch up with him. Soon, with the help of therapist Dr. Norma Mellows, he finds himself making a case to fight for his freedom and true identity.

In his new novel, My Case Rests, B. H. Friedman, author of numerous novels, stories, plays, and monographs, takes a penetrating look at the worlds of Little Italy, Broadway, and the Hamptons, and a deeper psychological voyage. In Tony Baldwin, he creates a complex character whose journey toward the truth ultimately strips away masks and disguises.



TRIPPING: A MEMOIR BY B. H. FRIEDMAN

In the 1960s, amid political upheaval and anti-war protests, a growing number of young Americans were creating their own visionary revolution by "tuning in, turning on, and dropping out." Cannabis was king, and the sacred mushrooms "psilocybin" and LSD were "tripping" the minds of thousands, led by psychologist/guru/pitchman Dr. Timothy Leary, the pied piper of the psychedelic drug scene.

In the retrospective memoir Tripping, B. H. Friedman, author of numerous novels, stories, plays, and monographs, takes us behind the scenes for an intimate look at Leary's inner circle, a group of teachers, students, and artists who participated in drug research and experimentation throughout much of the decade. Based on his detailed journals as well as correspondence with Leary and others, the author paints a fascinating and candid portrait of the firsthand effects of "tripping," and the ultimate price that some paid when dreams of innocence and liberation turned into nightmares. A true flashback to a turbulent time of excess and exhilaration, Tripping is the dramatic account of one man's journey through personal and professional upheaval and toward enlightenment.

Praise for **TRIPPING** "Fresh at a distance of 40 years, [B. H. Friedman's] descriptions are the most accurate evocations of the psychedelic experience I've ever read. They suggest that the sensationalizing of psychedelics (for which we have Timothy Leary to thank), and the criminalization that resulted, is an American tragedy." — Ann Marlowe, *The New York Observer*

ALMOST A LIFE "B. H. Friedman has a trigger mind and a candid eye. . . . The manner of the telling is as significant as the subject matter — cool, urbane, dialectical, touched by Jamesian irony. . . . extends beyond its frame into a study of the relationship between biography and fiction, subject and object, hero and anti-hero. . . . A serious and subtle achievement." — Stanley Kunitz

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PROVINCETOWN ARTS 2009

ON THE COVER

Varujan Boghosian *Photograph by Phil Smith*

Mary Oliver *Photograph by Rachel Giese Brown*

Varujan Boghosian, *Night and Day II (Orpheus and Pluto)* (detail), 1963, wood and steel, 12h by 12w by 7.25d inches, Collection of the artist

BUZZ

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Christopher Busa

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Nick Flynn

Robert Henry: Art Is Art and Everything Else Is Everything Else

Christopher Busa

Narrative Bodies: The Art of Tabitha Vevers

Rachel Rosenfield Lafo

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Charles Duncan

Sky Power: Beyond the Horizon

Susan Rand Brown

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Enchantment and Discontent: Bert Yarborough's Singular Aesthetic

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Provincetown: Crucible of Modernism

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Budd Hopkins

E. Ambrose Webster: Chasing the Sun

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Howard Karren

Cape Personalities: Kristina Bird and Painting Restoration

Taylor M. Polites

Jackie Lipton's Lavish Interiors

Eileen Myles

Carl Andre and Donald Judd: In Andre's Studio, July 11, 1970

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Suzanne McConnell

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Oona Patrick

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PROVINCETOWN ARTS

A publication of Provincetown Arts Press, Inc.,
a nonprofit press for artists and poets

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Published annually in midsummer since 1985, *Provincetown Arts* focuses broadly on artists, performers, and writers who inhabit or visit the tip of Cape Cod, and seeks to stimulate creative activity and enhance public awareness of the cultural life of the nation's oldest continuous art colony. Drawing upon a century-long tradition rich in art, theater, and writing, *Provincetown Arts* publishes essays, fiction, interviews, journals, performance pieces, poetry, profiles, reporting, reviews, and visual features, with a view toward demonstrating that a community of artists, functioning outside the urban centers, is a utopian dream with an ongoing vitality.

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Most of *Provincetown Arts* is freelance written. Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome and will be considered between October and January. Enclose SASE for writers' guidelines. The best guide for content and length is a study of past issues.

Member: Council of Literary Magazines and Presses

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Subscriptions are \$10 per annual issue
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Provincetown Arts is indexed in the *American Humanities Index*.

PRINTED IN USA

NATIONAL AND CANADA DISTRIBUTION
Ingram Periodicals, Nashville, TN

ISSN: 1053-5012

Printed by Reynolds-DeWalt in New Bedford, MA.

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artSTRAND opens its fifth season with Elizabeth Winston as Director and an entirely new approach to its yearly Portfolio Project. The artist/owners—Bailey Bob Bailey, Paul Bowen, Breon Dunigan, Maryalice Johnston, Irene Lipton, Francis Olschafskie, Jim Peters, Anna Poor, and Bert Yarborough—produced a series of nine original works to fit in different-sized compartments of nine identical wooden boxes. The collection is called “artWINDOW” since it can be viewed behind glass or opened to be displayed individually. The five-year anniversary also celebrates the gallery’s experiment in art and community. “In the past, my experience working with other artists has felt very competitive,” sculptor Anna Poor says, “But in artSTRAND I’ve never found that. I truly enjoy being with other artists similar in age, watching each other grow. It’s really a comradeship—we’re working towards the same goal of making art and being the best artist possible—while supporting what everyone else is doing. That’s amazing.” Along with individual artist shows, two large invitationals, “paperJAM” and “All About Photography,” will bring a broad spectrum of work to the community.

James Bakker, director of the Pilgrim Monument and Provincetown Museum, has an eye for art inspired by the early history of Provincetown. The museum’s summerlong exhibition, *Pilgrims, Patriots and Products: Selling the Colonial Image*, explores the links between images of patriotism and commercial desire. Bakker is also to be credited for the museum’s display of important canvases that were hanging in Town Hall, but were obliged to be removed during the building’s present reconstruction—paintings by Charles Hawthorne, Frederick Waugh, William Halsall, and George Elmer Browne. Max Bohm, Hawthorne’s assistant and the grandfather of artist Anne Packard, painted a stirring study of the Pilgrims signing the Mayflower Compact in 1620.

James Bennett and David Cowan, Harvard-trained architects who began to focus their attention on the paintings that hung on the walls of houses that architects built, are the distinguished founders of ACME Fine Art in Boston, where so many Provincetown artists, long known in New York, now have a genuine venue in Boston. This spring they curated a museum-quality exhibition, *Days Lumberyard Studios, Provincetown, 1915–1972*, showing rarely seen paintings by participants. Michael Mazur, in his article concerning artists’ studios in Provincetown, cited many of these artists, and the ACME show is an extension of the historical examination of our roots, trunks, branches, and leaves.

Romolo Del Deo, a sculptor who works in bronze and shows in Provincetown at the Berta Walker Gallery, was invited to give a lecture, “The Tactile Memory of Bronze,” last fall in London at the Courtauld Institute of Art. He is developing his topic into an essay with a group of English critics, exploring “the distance between the tactile



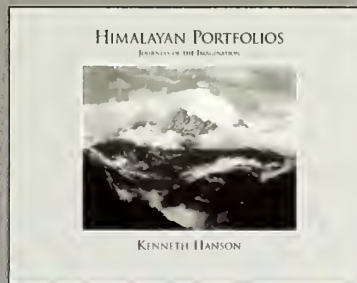
DEL FILARDI'S "BLUE HERON"



artSTRAND "artWINDOW #5"



MAX BOHM, STUDY OF THE PILGRIMS SIGNING THE MAYFLOW COMPACT IN 1620



JOHN GRILLO, "UNTITLED MOSAIC"
COURTESY ACME FINE ART, "DAYS LUMBERYARD STUDIOS" EXHIBITION



ELSPETH HALVORSEN, 1995
PHOTO VINCENT GUADAZZO

experience of making as framed by art history and the significance of understanding the current environment, where the elements of material and craft are subsumed under theoretical concerns.”

Charles Fields, the photographer who specializes in publishing art and coffee-table books, recently released Kenneth Hanson’s *Himalayan Portfolios: Journeys of the Imagination*, an extraordinary photographic record of a dozen treks to nearly inaccessible Himalayan regions between 1985 and 2005. “This is one of our most important books ever,” Fields said. “The photography is breathtaking.” Charles Fields Publishing recently won the Independent Book Publishers Association Benjamin Franklin Award for *Anne Packard*, published last year.

Del Filardi’s life-size blue heron of weather-burnished steel will soon fly atop the cupola of Prez Hall in Wellfleet, which will open next year as a community cultural center. Filardi, with her partner, Harriet Rubin, ran the Blue Heron Gallery, focusing on artists who learned from nature. On the day they closed for the mortgage, a blue heron flew overhead. Native Americans said the bird conferred good luck. They knew that where you found the heron, you found the fish.

Elsbeth Halvorsen was included in a prominent exhibition at the Hollis Taggart Galleries in New York last winter, “Image in the Box: From Cornell to Contemporary,” along with Joseph Cornell, Maureen McCabe, Leo Rabkin, Pierre Roy, Lucas Samaras, and Ted Victoria. The lavishly illustrated catalogue includes essays by Jeffrey Wechsler and Townsend Ludington, who wrote our cover story on Tony Vevers in 2006. Halvorsen’s box constructions—with bleached bones and burnished metal glistening in a cone of light coming through a hole in the box, like a skylight in a studio—combine their elements in an assembled dialogue that has much in common with our cover subject, Varujan Boghosian, who was Tony Vevers’s colleague at Long Point Gallery.

Benton Jones, who sculpts in metal and glass, will be exhibiting his new series of *Melting Hemispheres* this summer at Cortile Gallery in Provincetown. Fashioned from defunct glass flotation devices once used for deep-sea research missions, and earmarked to become landfill by the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, the allure in their ice-like appearance offers translucent reminders of our vulnerability.

John Kearney, the Chicago and Provincetown sculptor, is closing the Contemporary Art Workshop, which has offered emerging artists studios, workshops, and exhibitions since 1949. Alan Arner, chief art critic for the *Chicago Tribune*, wrote a memorable elegy: “No other Chicago venue has done more for young artists. No other place in the United States has served the interests of the local art community as consistently and selflessly.” Kearney returns again to Provincetown for a summer of welding and casting in his studio on Aunt Sukey Way.

Chris McCarthy, director of the Provincetown Art Association and Museum, announced this spring that the museum had been accredited by the American Association of Museums, earning national recognition. Ford W. Bell, president of AAM, said, "Accreditation assures the people of Provincetown that their museum is among the finest in the nation." McCarthy said, "Accreditation positions us for future loans of art, traveling exhibitions, and granting opportunities."

Alan Morehouse has been sculpting animals for years—owls, parrots, elephants, seagulls. Recently he installed a pair of whales' tails at the entrance to a private residence above the moors in Provincetown. The tails, cut off by the earth into which they dive, are taller than a man and paired to convey their graceful interaction of power and tapering curves.

Ewa Nogiec (www.iamprovincetown.com), born in Poland and nurtured in Provincetown, where she gave back created designs that helped foster community identity, including the logo for the Visitor's Service Board, has opened her own exhibition venue on Shank Painter Road, which she calls Gallery Ehva, aware that all her clients need coaching in how to pronounce the w in her first name, which should sound like a v. From our founding days in the summer of 1985 and evolving until 2001, with our dual issue of poet Alan Dugan and the artist Judith Shahn sharing the cover, Ewa was the art director of *Provincetown Arts*, and was a key to our initial success. Her motto remains, "Art is good."

Anne Packard is the subject of an authoritative new monograph from Skylark Press, a foot square in shape, allowing generous presentation of the artist's introspective skies, seas, and landscapes. Her paintings offer evidence of people, but seldom depict people themselves. Her stark wharves and empty boats are haunted by the absence of their users. Packard's paintings are on exhibit summerlong at her eponymous gallery, a former Unitarian church with a modest steeple. The new book offers little-known biographical information and places her career in a broad historical and geographical context. David Michaelis, author of *Schulz and Peanuts*, was an immediate neighbor of the Packard family for many years, and his riveting memoir evokes the personal side of this sometimes reclusive artist. Peter Frank, senior curator at the Riverside Art Museum in California, offers the first in-depth reading of major paintings. In his earlier biography of N. C. Wyeth, patriarch of Andrew and Jamie, Michaelis had learned about generations of painters in the same family, "working out their lives on canvas." He became interested in the parallels between Anne Packard and her maternal grandfather, the painter Max Bohm, who is remembered as one of America's leading painters. This is a book that shows the belated triumph of his art.

Julian Pop is an artist and a lobsterman, every Christmas season decorates Lopez Square



CHRIS MCCARTHY



JULIAN POPKO "TREE"



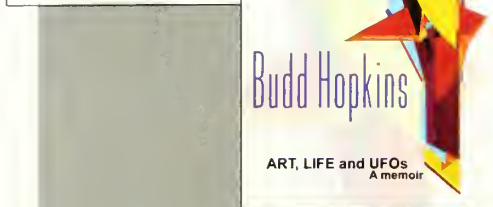
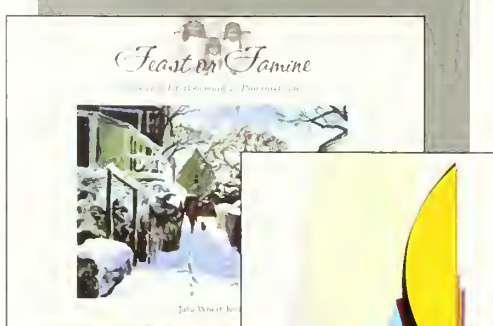
ALAN R. MOREHOUSE



HELEN MIRANDA WILSON



GALLERY EHVA



at the entrance to MacMillan Pier with 112 lobster traps. Two stories high, the "tree" is fitted with 3,400 bulbs that make the bleak winter nights a delight.

Helen Miranda Wilson, who appeared on our cover in 2007, with her rectangular grids of bright color in the background, showed new paintings this spring at Victoria Munroe Fine Art in Boston, called *Halos*. These circular arrangements animate the interaction of colors in an entirely new way. Susan Post, who received her MFA at the Mass College of Art under Wilson in the extension program of the Fine Arts Work Center, looks insightfully at Wilson's fresh gouaches: "Wilson's abstractions consistently combine openness with boundaries, but while her previous work's stripes and rectangles prompted a natural tendency to 'read' the progression of colors—echoing Wilson's painting process itself—the concentric parallelism of the halos provides a more optical experience, drawing the viewer into each target-like figure. Wilson's brush-handling skills translate better from oils to gouache than the colors themselves do, and I found myself welcoming the flaws and smudges for the relief from skill, whereas in her oils the luscious surface is always accomplished with grace, however the colors may encounter one another. There is a sense of revision in some of the concentric compositions, but the best of them exhibit Wilson's more characteristic and vast capacity for discovery."

writing

Budd Hopkins, whose appreciation of the painting of Sideo Fromboluti appears in this issue, is the author of a new book, *Art, Life and UFOs: A Memoir*, forthcoming in July from Anomalist Books. A fixture for decades on the Cape Cod art scene, Hopkins was a founding member of the legendary Long Point Gallery and he continues his annual painting workshop at Truro Center for the Arts at Castle Hill. Beyond the wide recognition he has received as an artist, Hopkins is even more widely known as one of the world's foremost authorities on UFO abductions. *Intruders*, a *New York Times* best seller, was also the subject of a CBS miniseries. In a profile of the artist, his art, and its connection with alien life—"Budd Hopkins's Extraordinary Investigation into Mystery," published last year in *Provincetown Arts*—Hopkins declared that after his first daylight sighting of a UFO in the Truro woods in 1964, and subsequent interviews with people who described their own UFO experiences, "I no longer have the luxury of disbelief."

Julia Whorf Kelly is the irreverent daughter of the irreverent artist Nancy Whorf Kelly and the granddaughter of the famously irreverent watercolorist John Whorf, known for the magic glimpses in his seascapes so reminiscent of the swelling volumes in his female nudes. Her recent book, *Feast or Famine: Growing Up Bohemian in Provincetown*, is illustrated with work by artists of

each generation, and Julia's tale, naming names and vividly detailing how she lived, is a historical treasure. Much seasoned wit animates the layout of this book, where, for example the chapter discussing the exposed-to-the-Atlantic Back Shore opens with a facing page of the parabolic backside of one of her grandfather's reclining females.

Edith Kurzweil founded the William Phillips Lecture Series, held annually at the New School for Social Research in New York, shortly after the demise of her husband five years ago. Phillips was the legendary editor of *Partisan Review* and a mentor to the editor of *Provincetown Arts*. The lecture series continues the kind of intelligent symposiums on burning issues of the moment that the journal was known for. Last November, the featured speaker was Michal Govrin, the daughter of a Holocaust survivor and a novelist living in Jerusalem, who delivered a stirring and hopeful assessment on "Israel at 60—Reality, Utopia, or Provocation?"

Ellen Langer, featured previously in *Provincetown Arts*, is the author of a new book, *Counterclockwise: Mindful Health and the Power of Possibility* (Random House), which extends her vision and extends our thinking about healing ourselves through questioning. She is an expert in shifting our point of view and arousing our attention with fundamental questions. She asks us to consider "how the deaf come to see better just as the blind develop more acute hearing. Every day we learn that something we accepted as true the day before is now false. It used to be said that butter was better. Then margarine was the only way to go. And now butter is back. But olive oil trumps them all. Any attempt to keep up with the new medical findings is stressful enough that it's likely bad for our health. It's like a scene from Woody Allen's *Sleeper*, where upon awakening from a very long siesta, the protagonist discovers that everything bad is good again."

Kathleen Rooney, a former Fine Arts Work Center writing fellow, visited briefly on a stop on her national tour publicizing *Live Nude Girl: My Life as an Object*, an account of her career posing in life drawing classes. She modeled for two years in sessions at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum. The alluring cover is a drawing by Jim Peters of a nude naked but for a scrap of underwear. The woman's face is turned and her arms are raised as she fixes her hair, unaware of the viewer's gaze. If bird-watchers are platonic voyeurs, then Paul Valéry was right when he said, "The nude is for the artist what love is for the poet."

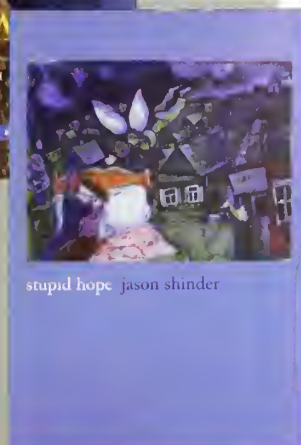
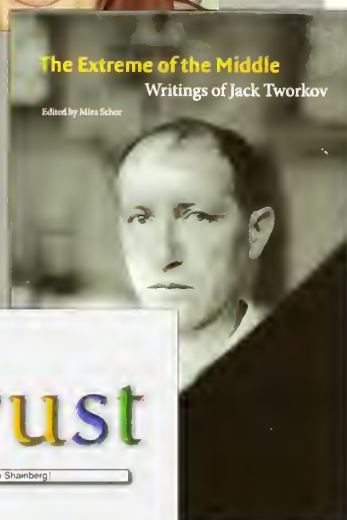
Liz Rosenberg, who selected the poetry last year in *Provincetown Arts*, is the author of a new novel, *Home Repair*, published by Avon/HarperCollins. Her prose has learned from her poetry how to break the reader's heart, and then repair it. While her heroine holds a massive garage sale in a symbolic act of simplifying her life, her husband drives off to do an errand, and never returns. The book is a tragedy with a happy ending. For more than ten summers, Rosenberg has conducted a poetry



DINNER AT THE MAILER HOUSE WITH RICHARD MEIER, SALVATORE SCIBONA, LARRY SCHILLER, AND GUESTS



ELLEN LANGER



workshop at the Fine Arts Work Center, and will return after a sabbatical in London.

Lawrence Schiller, the founder of the Norman Mailer Writers Colony, has been filming the workshops, discussion groups, and presentations by the fellows and students participating in the blitz of the program's first season. Norman's house has never been more active, even when he was alive. Schiller is Mailer's longtime collaborator on such projects as *The Executioner's Song*. Mailer aspired to filmmaking and Schiller aspired to writing, and the formation of the Colony is the living will of Mailer's desire to foster writers. Provincetown Arts Press joined with the Colony to present Salvatore Scibona with a clear crystal model of a hefty book with the etched visage of Norman floating like a hologram: the Norman Mailer Award for Exceptional Writing. Scibona's novel, *The End*, was nominated for the National Book Award in 2008.

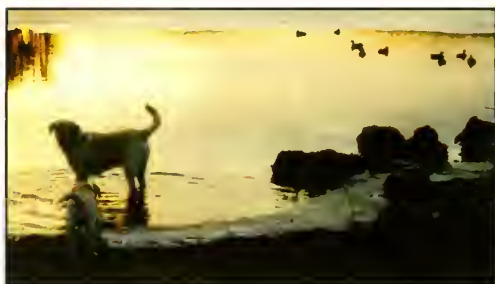
Mira Schor is the editor of the newly released *The Extreme of the Middle: Writings of Jack Tworok* (Yale University Press), a collection of the artist's journals, letters, teaching notebooks, correspondence with other artists, and published and unpublished articles. Tworok spent decades of summers in Provincetown, lived in New York, and was chairman of the Art Department at Yale. Schor is a painter and author of *Wet: On Painting, Feminism, and Art Culture* (Duke University Press, 1997). Her new book offers rich detail and highly original insight into Tworok's aesthetic in the context of his colleagues in the formative days of Abstract Expressionism. On November 12, 1958, Tworok recorded his thoughts: "I am just beginning to be aware of what has been bothering me in my painting for some time. This past summer in P'town was an effort to break away from 'stroke' painting. I began looking for a shape, for more somber colors. I have the deepest need for a simpler, stronger, profounder form."

Lawrence Shainberg's most recent novel, *Crust*, is dedicated to Norman Mailer, who was a friend. And Mailer's blurb is especially significant since the sense of smell, the subject of Shainberg's novel, is the one sense that Mailer has explicitly developed as a novelistic resource. Mailer's praise: "*Crust* is unique. I know of no other novel remotely like it. The first words that come to mind are daring, daunting, irreligious in the extreme, an academic send-up, and a grasp with no small grin of the essential mindlessness and urge to power that beset humans and creates new ventures. It's wild as sin and revolting as vomit and as exceptional as the lower reaches of insanity itself."

Jason Shinder, vice president of Provincetown Arts Press until his too-young expiration last year, has produced a book from beyond the grave, *Stupid Hope* (Graywolf Press), thanks to the collaborative efforts of the friends and poets Jason chose as his executors: Sophie Cabot Black, Lucie Brock-Broido, Tony Hoagland, and Marie Howe. Jason worked obsessively on individual poems and on the ordering of poems in a book. The editors write in the book's afterword: "Jason must have smiled

imagining his four dear and very different friends trying to come to poetic consensus. Working alone and together—in person, on telephones, through emails, reading poems aloud, ordering and reordering pages—we slowly came into confidence that this collection is close to what Jason would have wanted.”

Will Walker, author of *Wednesday after Lunch* (Blue Lights Press, 2009), is the bighearted offspring of the Walker family, and he is a poet whose oblique observations may be completely clear to his readers. Growing up, Walker endured a cloud of unknowing that drove him into counseling as a way of utilizing his own trauma. His poems are radiant with insight into human compassion. One describes a man and his wife, sleeping, “on your own side / of the bed / split neatly into neighboring countries.”



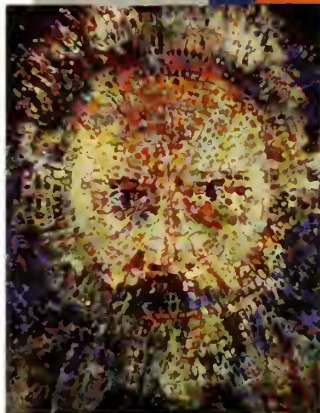
A Heaven

The old dog lies
without remorse.
The sun will shine
The sun will set;
He is content.
Simple.
Tail and paw
muzzle, grey.
Still.
While by while,
the eyes close.
The nose lifts
quivers
as in a dream
of remembered
fields
suns,
wafts of animals
unknown
exciting;
clouds of splendor
from long ago
winds.
Faithful friend
gone
to pastures of gold
sweet
wild with the barks
of cheering
wolves
and filled with bones.

—S.R.



GUY MADDIN



CHUCK CLOSE,
“PORTRAIT OF
LUCAS SAMARAS”
FROM MARION CAJORI’S
FILM, “CHUCK CLOSE”



MARISA SKILLINGS



TENNESSEE
WILLIAMS IN THE
DUNES IN PTOWN
IN 1944, THE YEAR
HE WROTE “THE
GLASS MENAGERIE”



DAVID KAPLAN

theater and film

Gabrielle Hanna, director of the Provincetown International Film Festival, held annually in June, said she was “delighted to be able to present the Filmmaker on the Edge Award to a true independent spirit and filmmaker,” Guy Maddin, director of *My Winnipeg* and *The Saddest Music in the World*. Among the films that played were Elizabeth Maclean’s profile of the photographer Norma Holt and Gerry Perry’s *For the Love of Movies*, the personal take on film by the longtime film critic at the *Boston Phoenix*. Perry wrote the feature on John Waters when our local celebrity appeared on the cover of *Provincetown Arts* in 1997, and the article was selected for *The Best American Movie Writing* by George Plimpton.

Rick Jasany, a photographer who lived in Provincetown in the eighties, was well aware in 1974 of an upstart, ponytailed, gay Jewish hippie transplant from Manhattan named Harvey Milk: “They had burst upon the Castro scene, with flamboyance and fanfare, opening a camera shop conspicuous as an activist hangout. Milk cleaned up his act—he lost his ponytail and beard—for his run to become the first openly gay elected official in the country. His nemesis, Dan White, shot him dead. Milk and White are mixed in the performance of Sean Penn. Penn takes on Milk’s quirky body language and facial expressions, the way the man strode, flailed, smirked, winced, grimaced, and grinned, giving us glimpses into the warring factions of Milk’s personality. The voice and dialect are hair-raisingly on the mark. Penn is among the screen’s elite actors—I can’t imagine anyone else in this role.”

Sebastian Junger, the Truro author of *The Perfect Storm* and a co-owner of the Half King Bar and Restaurant in New York, has created the vibrant Half King Reading Series, often coupled with outstanding exhibitions of photographs from the war-torn countries Junger tends to report on for *Vanity Fair*. Junger’s new book, forthcoming next fall, is an account of his time embedded with combat troops in Afghanistan. On May 18, Gretchen Peters read from her new book, *Seeds of Terror: How Heroin Is Bankrolling the Taliban and al Qaeda*, pointing out that the heroin labs run by the Taliban commanders gross over half a billion dollars a year. She traces their activities from the poppy fields in Afghanistan to the money launderers in Karachi and Dubai. She argues passionately that we must cut terrorists off from drug cartels if we hope to beat them.

David Kaplan, curator of the Tennessee Williams Theater Festival (September 24–27) for the fourth year since its founding, is director of *The Day on Which a Man Dies*, inspired by the death of Jackson Pollock, who was a friend of Williams since their days in Provincetown in the forties. This year’s theme is a battle cry for stirring artists to, as Williams urged, “advance as soldiers do: with discipline, passion, and power.” Sylvia Miles, in a joint benefit with the Norman Mailer Writers Colony, will channel Williams’s *Sweet Bird of Youth*.



JEFF ZINN

Howard Karren, who does the programming at FilmArt@PAAM, the Art Association's off-season film series, this spring offered a documentary portrait, *Agnes Martin: With My Back to the World*, revelatory especially about how the artist's upbringing on the vast, stark, and gridded prairies produced such a calm aesthetic. Other artist films included *Chuck Close* and *Louise Bourgeois: The Spider, the Mistress, and the Tangerine*.

Kevin Rice is artistic director (succeeding founder Guy Strauss in 2007) of the Payomet Performing Arts Center, which is located on the windswept grounds of the Highland Center for the Arts on the former air force base in North Truro, a most dramatic location for seeing live theater. We wonder how many witnessed the staged reading of Edgar Lee Masters's classic collection of small-town portraits, *Spoon River Anthology*, during the month of May.

Heidi Jon Schmidt, who grew up backstage at her mother's summer stock theater, had the experience of watching her young daughter, Marisa, act in local theatrical productions. We asked her what she thought about Provincetown theater today, and she said: "Let's see: Provincetown has been home to the greatest American playwrights. American theater began here with Eugene O'Neill's plays at the Provincetown Players. He is the only Nobel laureate with Provincetown roots. Theater has been faltering here for decades, while the Fine Arts Work Center and the Provincetown Art Association and Museum championed the other arts, and kept them thriving. Wellfleet stole our thunder (kudos to Jeff Zinn, who kept honest theater going all these years). Susan Grilli materialized in Provincetown, founding Counter Productions on a shoestring, and began producing one terrific modern play after another, using the great talent available in town, continuing a long tradition, and just in time for O'Neill's centennial."

Jeff Zinn, artistic director of the Wellfleet Harbor Actors Theater, has transformed their rented venue on the water into the full stage of the Julie Harris Theater in their outstanding new building. In a quarter century, WHAT has established itself as nationally respected for the quality of its adventuresome productions. In August, WHAT presents *Voices of a People's History of the United States*, a new film based on the seminal book by Howard Zinn, Jeff's father. As in the book, history is told in the voice of the individual citizen and the ordinary people who are the actors in a democratic society and who led great social movements to end slavery, protest war, advance women's rights, and foster gay liberation.

Letter from the Managing Editor

This year's issue of *Provincetown Arts* has a special meaning for me. The day before I received the first group of articles from Chris to review, one of my beloved Labs, my thirteen-year-old Vail, passed away. I tried to put aside my grief and set to work, but as I worked, there seemed to be new significance in the words. Every article was heightened with emotion; each story imbued with loss, and love.



The work of our first featured artist, Varujan Boghosian, is informed by myth, especially in his identification with Orpheus, whose grief was so great, he traveled to the Kingdom of the Dead to bring back his wife, Eurydice—but could not, because it wasn't meant to be. Boghosian collects the effluvium of people's lives—found objects, once treasured, now discarded—and through the skillful transformation of his art, resurrects their meaning.

Mary Oliver, our second featured artist, finds inspiration for her writing in the "found objects" of the woods and dunes of the Provincelands, and her animal companion, Percy. Oona Patrick's interview with her illuminates the way a sense of place deeply informs the poet's life and work; four new poems, which we are honored to introduce in this issue, are examples of this synthesis. Patrick also mentions the Provincetown artists Norman Mailer and Stanley Kunitz, icons of art, and friends to so many, who have passed on. Grief is present, but, to borrow a phrase from Oliver, in the wake of difficult times we may also find "a permanent enrichment."

Dwayne Raymond's article on Norman Mailer is a fond reminiscence of the writer's life and work. As he writes at Mailer's own desk, Raymond finds preciousness in small objects from the past, frozen in time—index cards, a dictionary, a statuette of a soldier—reminders of the great man and his work.

And so Provincetown and her residents reflect the rest of the world, in the rhythms of life, loss, and continuation—and yet perhaps, in some ways, the memories are brought home more strongly here. The homes and studios of artists past are constant physical reminders in the town, along with the artwork itself. And the very woods and seashores of this area, which inspire Mary Oliver so, seem to capture the essence of the passing years in their timeless beauty, as they whisper into the ears of artists the secrets of the land.

Our magazine is one catalyst to bring the fruits of this inspiration to light. In our twenty-fourth year of publication, *Provincetown Arts* continues to memorialize the oldest artists colony in the country, local artists and their work, and, equally important, the community and land that inspire the art of creation. In archiving and honoring the stories of this place and people, we bring to them, perhaps, a sort of immortality as well.

As always, the staff at *Provincetown Arts* must be acknowledged for the dedication that brings these stories to print. Our publisher, Chris Busa, gathers together the stories of artists' lives and work in a wonderful alchemy, creating a collage that is at once eclectic and coherent. Irene Lipton, herself an artist, creates, as always, a thing of beauty in the magazine design. And Ingrid Aue, our marketing director, works tirelessly yearlong to bring each issue to an ever-growing audience.

And so this year, as we say good-bye to so many dear friends, we also welcome a "permanent enrichment"—in friends and in nature and in all facets of creation. We may look forward in the months to come to the blossoming of remembrance, and the celebration of life that will follow.

Susanna Ralli
Managing Editor

Varujan Boghosian

THE ARTIST AS ORPHEUS

By Christopher Busa

PHOTO BY PHIL SMITH



ORPHEUS WAS GIVEN a lyre by his father and learned to play it so well that animals stopped grazing, their ears acutely attuned. Even in the absence of wind, trees began to sway. Marble was said to soften, and Sisyphus rested on the cushion of his rock. With the allure of his mesmerizing lyre, opening Pluto's ears to the sound of high harmony, Pluto granted Orpheus entrance to the underworld to rescue his beloved Eurydice, after she died from a snake bite on one of her ankles, very shortly after their ecstatic marriage. Orpheus almost succeeded in his valiant rescue. But he violated a crucial condition demanded by Pluto, lord of the underworld: Orpheus was forbidden to turn and look back at Eurydice as she followed him, limping on her wounded foot, single file, on their ascent to the world of the living. As darkness began to lighten, he turned to confirm her presence. Stretching his arms to grasp her, he embraced empty air. She vanished, and his solitary return became the occasion for still greater grief. He was attacked by the beautiful women he scorned in the delirium of his sorrow. They tore his body into pieces and let the head float down into the blue sea, with the name of Eurydice trembling on its tongue.

VARUJAN BOGHOSIAN, 2009
FACING PAGE: THE ARTIST'S
STUDIO IN DARTMOUTH



This myth—mingling themes of illusion and reality, dream and wakefulness, hope and despair, love and loss—has fascinated artists and poets since the dawn of civilization in ancient Greece, and its influence continues unabated in our day. Jean Cocteau's film *Orpheus* (1949) begins with the hero living in postwar Paris among friends at the Café of the Poets. Tennessee Williams's play *Orpheus Descending* (1957) is set in a dry goods store in a bigoted and repressive Southern town. Orpheus is portrayed as a mysterious drifter who arrives wearing a snakeskin jacket and strumming a guitar. Williams later wrote in a poem about Orpheus: "for you must learn, even you, what we have learned, / that some things are marked by their nature not to be completed / but only longed for and sought for awhile and abandoned."

The very things that were once desired and later abandoned are precisely the objects that Varujan Boghosian selects for his constructions and collages. Throughout his fifty-year career, Boghosian has scoured junk shops, antique offerings, small-town dumps, and urban wrecking yards, seeking what is worn, distressed, or otherwise diminished by the passing of time. Never does he use anything new, save perhaps for the glue that holds together the elements he has rescued for redemption.

Something of an ethnologist, gathering shards from past cultures, Boghosian amasses a variety of artifacts that cluster into categories: wagon wheels with missing spokes; weathered doors and windows; stacks of bat-

tered and empty picture frames; turn-of-the-last-century schoolboy slates; birdcages; bells ("when I see a bell," he says, "I hear the wonderful sound they give out"); toy trumpets; carnival masks; wooden mannequins with flexible legs, arms, torsos, and necks; billiard balls; hockey pucks; trays holding moveable type; children's letter blocks for learning the alphabet; composite stone "anchor blocks," developed, like erector sets, to teach yesterday's children how to build structures; hairbrushes and combs; archaic tools that remain functional; wooden clamps; dull knives; artificial birds and butterflies; hat blocks for fashioning felt bowlers and silk derbies; ironing boards severely cracked along a check in the wood's grain; odd metal clasps and the most tenuously bent wire; the stems, bowls, or other fragments of clay pipes found in Provincetown harbor; Confederate currency; toy boats; wax fruit; grainy photographs and damaged etchings; wallpaper samples bound in mildewed booklets; marbled paper; paper stars for excellence in work by children in kindergarten; dog-eared playing cards; tattered pincushions; fraying canvas hats; brass wing nuts that may serve as butterflies. He welcomes rust to iron, cracks in glass, tears in fabric, and stains on sheet music. Presently, he is on the prowl for old horseshoes, especially, he says, "ones with the nails still in."

In *The Savage Mind*, the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss developed the concept of a type of artist he called a *bricoleur*; the word derives from the verb *bricoler*, which means to putter about, tinker with an object,



CHARIOT, 1979, MIXED MEDIA: BRONZE, MARBLE, AND LEATHER, 28.5H BY 13.5W BY 30D INCHES

or fiddle around. The bricoleur fashions improvised arrangements from whatever he can scavenge. Lévi-Strauss believed that mythic thinking was also a kind of bricolage, in that a structure was created from signs standing for something else. What is signified becomes a signifier via a discussion between its materials—asking what is added, what is omitted, what is substituted, and what is transposed. Art is about transformation, and the bricoleur, like Boghosian, is a type of collage artist.

A salient feature of Boghosian's mode of presentation is his architectural awareness of the frame itself. Last January, I journeyed to visit his studio at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, famous for its vast surplus of *stuff* the artist, never in his lifetime, will ever utilize. Since his retirement he has moved most of its contents to two smaller studios in the basement of the English Department. His previous studio in the basement of Webster Hall, which many visitors toured, was remembered for the stimulation of its silences. The same atmosphere prevails in the present studios. In the quiet of puppets and mannequins sprawled on shelves, many voices seem to be muttering sotto voce, just beyond the range of audibility. I had the distinct sense that I heard several clocks ticking at alternative intervals from each corner of the room. Indeed, there is apparent purpose in the placing of rows between tables, storage counters, shelves, pedestals, chairs, stacks of books. Nothing is hidden away behind closets or out of reach; instead, everything is on display and available at arm's length.

But one looks in vain for a working area, where the artist would do the actual fitting together of a particular construction. Boghosian told me that he did use a lot of the tools available at the Hopkins Center of Art, across the street from his studio. Elegant and raw at once, Boghosian's boxes are not demonstrations of his craftsmanship. Rather, they are demonstrations of his *touch*—his artistry and the quintessential resurrection of the acquisitions of his foraging.

Robert Motherwell was Boghosian's colleague during the decades of summers they showed together at Long Point Gallery, and they discussed this phenomenon of foraging as basic training for the artist. Motherwell told me in 1991 (for an article featuring the group in *Provincetown Arts*) about looking at art through the eyes of some of the Surrealists he had known in New York in the early 1940s, including André Breton, whom Motherwell called "The Pope of Surrealism." Paradoxically, for a group that valued originality so highly, their practice often took the form of joint projects. After a lunch of "good bistro food" on Fifty-fifth Street, Motherwell would accompany a dozen artists on a walking tour of the flea markets and eclectic antique shops located on Third Avenue. "We would go in,"

Motherwell said, "and out of the heaps of old beds, strange furniture, fragments of sculpture, porcelain, whatever, each of us had to point out what was surrealist and what wasn't. If you were wrong, then the Pope said you were wrong. In all my life, and I have spent my life looking, I must say I have never looked as hard as during those moments where I had to pick out what was surrealist from a given mass of junk."

Another student of "close looking" in Boghosian's circle of friends was the poet Stanley Kunitz, who dedicated a poem to him after a visit to his studio. The poem "Chariot" was published in the exhibition catalogue that accompanied Boghosian's retrospective at the Hood Museum at Dartmouth College in 1989. Kunitz's poem alludes to a heroic dimension in Orpheus's rescue quest, charging into Hades—not supine on Charon's sluggish raft, but standing heroically on "that horse-age wagon wheel," where "Tomorrow, maybe, at the crack of a whip / a flock of glittering birds will perch / on its rim, a burnished stranger / wearing an enigmatic mask / will mount its hub / and the great battered wheel / will start to spin."

Kunitz sensed how elements in the studio of his friend were alert and ready to spring into action, and no doubt the organization of Boghosian's studio is a coherent maze of pathways and relationships, some secret even to the artist. Like a bird-watcher, he uses his ears to locate the bird through its song. Throughout every phase of his career, birds, as well as butterflies, have figured as orphic emblems, representing the beauty of music and recalling the strum of Orpheus's lyre. They appear as harbingers of happiness, singing some song about life's circularity, and especially how death is bonded with life. There is a leaping quality to the large metaphors that Boghosian finds in small details; adeptly, he leaps between the verbal and visual. He is thrilled by puns that cross mediums. In fact, his cross-cultural work invokes an unfamiliar word, *ekphrasis*, a rhetorical turn in which one medium is presented in terms of another. A poem may describe a scene as well as a painting, and a painting may say more than a poem. It is an ancient confusion about how we see and say, not always knowing what we mean, but enjoying, sometimes raucously, the sense that traverses nonsense.

One of Boghosian's series, which he calls his *Why Nots*, combines the letter Y with a knot found in some piece of wood. No two *Why Nots* look



OUT OF THE SWING OF THE SEA, 2008, MIXED MEDIA, 30 BY 22.75 INCHES

alike. "I do my *Why Nots*," Boghosian said, "because of Louise Bogan's great poem, 'The Daemon.'" He knows the poem by heart and he quoted all three stanzas when we stood in his studio looking at a *Why Not* on the wall: "Must I show outright / The bruise in the side / The halt in the night, / And how death cried?"

Boghosian explained that he accumulates more than he will ever utilize as he needs a large selection to find the one item that will finally finish a piece. The stockpile is his source, an inventory that is like a bank account for the magical thinking that is his imagination. He more than replenishes what he withdraws. He has remarked, in fact, that when he is in the studio he feels like a "businessman who has a terrific investment in stock that must be put to use." His collections, which also are spread through every room of his house, are the valued things he lives with much of his day and night. He seems to have volunteered as their caretaker and taken responsibility and keen interest in their well-being. Over any period of several years, he will have dozens of projects in progress. He likes to be lucky, and nothing pleases him more than to find by accident some orphan that becomes the capstone to conclude a piece that otherwise would not be finished. (One of the roots of Orpheus's name is *orphan*.)

When Webster Hall took him in, Boghosian found a home that was curiously full of the very riches that Pluto stored in the earth, the metals and minerals that nourish the plants that return each spring when Pluto's wife, Persephone, emerges from her annual separation from Pluto. When she returns to the underworld, winter will commence. She is the reason we have winter. Mythic thinking allows the imagination to reify an abstraction, and make real the transformation of something abandoned into a thing of value. If Boghosian is mostly Orpheus, there is also his Plutonian side, hoarding his treasure in the basement of Webster Hall, yet allowing care packages to go out into the world.

Webster Hall, an elegant colonial building set majestically on an immense grassy knoll, houses the college's rare books and special collections. The building, named after the great statesman and Dartmouth alumnus Daniel Webster, is saturated in history; its collection includes 95,000 printed volumes dating from the fifteenth century and manuscripts dating from the thirteenth century BC. Besides forty-four of Robert Frost's notebooks, the library possesses recordings of Ono and Yaghan natives of Tierra del Fuego, the only known record of their now extinct tribal ceremonies. The building's prestigious collection has been supplemented with many gifts from Boghosian, when he discovers that something he bought for a song is now worth a lot of money.

In the light-filled atrium on the second floor, at the end of a ritual walk, positioned against the wall like the door to some sanctuary, hangs Boghosian's bronze sculpture *Prima Porta*. The massive, dark door seems to float forward from the white wall. Boghosian mentioned that it weighs eight hundred pounds. The door suggests entrance to a secret room, and is a fitting memorial to the time Boghosian worked here when his studio was below in the basement. Four finely articulated bronze birds perch in the four compartments or divisions of the door, and they are singing just as they do in Stanley Kunitz's poem. Next to the sculpture is a dictionary opened to the page where the definition of the word *apse* is cited: an especially sacred area in a place of reverence, such as a library, a church, or the studio of an artist.

Boghosian began teaching at Dartmouth in 1968 and was awarded an endowed position in 1982 as the George Frederick Jewett Professor of Art. Since retiring in 1996, Boghosian has continued his habitual descents to do his work, which has its origins in a love of enduring stories that began in New Britain, Connecticut, where he was born in 1926.

He was transformed by guidance from a remarkable teacher, Constance Carrier, a graduate of Smith College, who returned to her hometown to teach English and Latin in the high school. She was a charismatic mentor and was notable for publishing scholarly translations of the plays of Terrence and the poetry of Propertius and Tibullus. In addition, her own poems appeared frequently in the *New Yorker* and the *Atlantic Monthly*. She published three poetry collections, including *The Middle Voice*, which won the James Laughlin Award (formerly known as the Lamont Poetry Prize). Boghosian's embryonic efforts concentrated on the big things that make us all unhappy—life and death. Carrier introduced him to the Orpheus myth as a way of grappling with his nebulous abstractions. He began to

break down the various elements of the myth into a series of events, and, here, his sense of comedy was born. Three steps could transform an act into art. Jasper Johns had a three-step process: "Take an object. Do something to it. Do something else to it."

Orpheus became Boghosian's sidestepping alter ego, which he adopted for life, just as a man may wear a hat when he is in his twenties and years later find that he has become the hat. Even in ancient times, the existence of Orpheus was never affirmed. In an essay titled "Boghosian on Boghosian" published in 1993, the artist revealed a surprisingly frank explication of his driving motives: "Not being a scholar, I looked at the myth very simply. I worked with the raw basic myth and then made elaborations on it in my constructions. The meaning of the myth for me is the three principal characters: the hero Orpheus, Eurydice, and Pluto. These three characters formed a triangle that was very complex and also quite simple. The agonies that confronted Orpheus in his loss of Eurydice are comparable to the problems Pluto faced. Pluto's similar dilemma involved having his wife, Persephone, spend half the year in the underworld and then releasing her to the earth. Thus Orpheus's great sorrow in losing Eurydice was an emotion he had in common with Pluto. His journey to Hades was an expression of this sorrow as well as an attempt to resolve the problem. The sadness that results from human loss is a pervasive, universal emotion, and is common to all people."

After the war, Boghosian received the "gift," he said, of the GI Bill, which sustained him when he returned to New Britain in 1946 to attend Connecticut Teachers College, intending to develop a career in education. But another ambition was waking within him. He transferred to the Vesper George School of Art in Boston with the idea that he might become a commercial artist. Again, another teacher was pivotal in fostering his dream—James



PRIMA PORTA (WEBSTER HALL ATRIUM), 1978, BRONZE, 72H BY 45W BY 5D INCHES



PIPE DREAMS, 2006, MIXED MEDIA ON CHALKBOARD, 19.5 BY 23.5 INCHES

Wingate Parr, a noted watercolorist. "Parr," Boghosian said, "was a fine artist in this commercial art school. He was the catalyst for Ed Giobbi and me and the one who turned us on to watercolors. He took five of us to Provincetown. We rented a house on Miller Hill Road, run by Al Silva, which we called Shangri-La. We grew vegetables behind the house. I had the downstairs with two others who didn't end up staying. Sal Del Deo, Giobbi, and Ray Rizk had the upstairs. They were all studying with Hensche."

What tied the group together was their love of cooking. Giobbi, who became one of Boghosian's closest friends, came from a Depression-era childhood in Connecticut, much like Boghosian's in the factory town of New Britain. They had come from families where the nightly dinner gatherings, besides Sunday mornings at church, were their most spiritually rewarding occasions. On Saturday nights, the group threw a party for friends they were meeting during the summer; pungent odors, Puccini arias, and excited conversation made the experiences unforgettable.

At Vesper George, Sal Del Deo had suggested to Parr that the school invite the Provincetown artist Henry Hensche to give a demonstration. Hensche had assisted Charles Hawthorne at the Cape Cod School of Art until 1930, and then kept the school going under the same name when the founder died. Hensche continued the teaching principles of Hawthorne, declaring that painting was not drawing and that structure in color was built up with one spot of color against its adjacent other, like bricks in a building, with their sheen seen in the light of the time it was painted. Hensche wanted to know the time of day a certain flower was observed. This impressionistic method teaches a way to paint so that one tone is adjusted in terms of the actual circumstances in which objects are witnessed.

Moving in another direction, one that depended on the accumulation of past sunrises and the wearing away of time itself, Boghosian was considering ways to capture, not a moment in light or time, but rather documenting the effects of time's wear and tear on objects. On one occasion, Boghosian navigated his footing over the flat-topped boulders of the West End breakwater, built by the Army Corps of Engineers in 1911. Six or seven derelict fishing boats were slowly breaking apart as they were battered against the rocks. Boghosian climbed inside a pilothouse and unscrewed a porthole: "I used to go abroad and find something that had geometry to it, and I would take it." My sense is that he wanted to be closer to the captain who had once piloted the ship.

Once he secured a ship's timber, encrusted with barnacles, with a bent iron bolt protruding, which he used as a handle to drag it in low water along the breakwater. Clambering up the rocks to exit, he tipped the log into a vertical position so he could balance the center of gravity, and smoothly control its forward drop. He used the log as

a stable rail, gripping it as he climbed through the crevices in the boulders. At the top, two men said to Boghosian, "We watched you." Boghosian, flabbergasted, asked them why they didn't help. He can't remember what they said, but he kept that piece close by in Webster Hall as something of a talisman. He never used it in a work. When he moved, he gave it away.

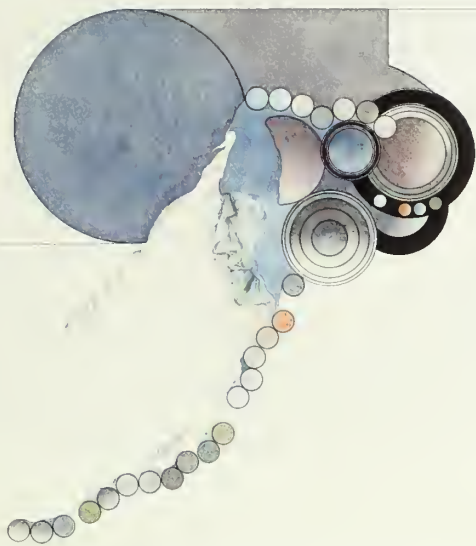
One sculpture that found its way to the Hood Museum at Dartmouth was originally discovered when he was walking barefoot on the beach below Highland Light in Truro and banged his toe against a blunt object buried in the sand, drawing blood. He dug in the sand and exposed a four-sided section of a ship's beam, with two large nails protruding from each end. Buried deeper under this piece was another section of milled wood, but thinner and longer. Putting the two together in his studio, he found he had created an inverted cross, an upside-down crucifix. He did very little but align the two pieces in this T-shape, resting it on its horizontal base and embellishing the top vertical with a band of gray sculpt metal. He also "capped" the piece with a memory of his navy days by finding a sheath of black iron, about the size and shape of a sailor's hat.

Boghosian often found objects of interest, and inspiration, as he strolled, face down, gazing at the exposed flats; the sandbars were almost continuous to Wood End Light, where the tip of Cape Cod sharply coils back upon itself. This area was the old industrial part of Provincetown, which clung to the waterfront because that is where the commerce was. During the nineteenth century as many as one hundred wharves thrust from the shore into the harbor. There were tall shacks for drying nets and open-air frames for drying fish. Most were gone by the time Boghosian arrived, but evidence of prior activity could be found in fragments littering the sea bottom, always accessible at low tide, when the water withdrew to reveal its hidden wares.

Until 1935, when the town created a dump, people tended to toss what they didn't want into the harbor. Twice a day, the tides took their trash away, but bottles, ceramics, and a strange abundance of clay pipes, popular before the advent of the briar pipe, remained. Broken bowls and stems were scattered in abundance. Boghosian began gathering them, amassing



FALL OF ICARUS, 2008, MIXED MEDIA, 24 BY 17 INCHES



CHARON, 1979, INK AND WATERCOLOR ON PAPER, 30.5 BY 22 INCHES

over decades more than ten thousand fragments. Only a small fraction has been incorporated into finished works.

Following his first summers in Provincetown, Boghosian returned to Boston for his studies at Vesper George. He began to frequent the Frameshop Gallery, nearby on Huntington Avenue, which, at the time, was mostly a vast railroad yard. He did a series of watercolors about locomotives—"from memory—very loose but tight." The gallery was run by Hyman Swetoff; besides showing upcoming local artists such as Boghosian, Harold Tovish, Hyman Bloom, and Georgy Kepes, Swetoff exhibited small works by European masters, such as Henry Moore, James Ensor, and Honoré Daumier. Swetoff mounted a memorable show of Daumier drawings, each priced around \$250. Boghosian, of course, could not afford to buy one; he had just married Marilyn, with whom he would remain linked until her death fifty-three years later, and the two of them were "struggling." Instead, he said, he acquired "a great education" at the gallery. Soon, Swetoff took him on as an artist. When the gallery moved to Newbury Street, so did Boghosian, showing with Swetoff until his death in 1965.

Boghosian's career was launched in 1951 with the first show he had at Swetoff's gallery, a portfolio of ten woodcuts, titled *Orpheus*. I viewed them recently at the Cape Cod Museum of Art in Dennis, which has a set in their collection. The same image of Orpheus is rendered in ten unique incarnations, some fuller, others more schematic. Yet no single version contains the most information. The fleshy and the skeletal achieve equivalence. Those with fragmented features say more with less, and perhaps that is why there is such balance in the grouping. It was as if a withered face disappeared into the structure of its bones, where its youth yet showed through its age.

Boghosian's benefits from the GI Bill expired when he finished at Vesper George. He applied for and received a Fulbright Fellowship in 1951, and he and Marilyn spent a transformative year in Italy. Boghosian appreciated how the Italians incorporated contemporary bustle into ever-present antiquity. He would return later several times on fellowships with the American Academy in Rome and a Guggenheim Fellowship. On his first trip, he stayed in Perugia in central Italy along the Tiber River. He produced a portfolio of watercolors and drawings, which he called *Italian Sketchbook*.

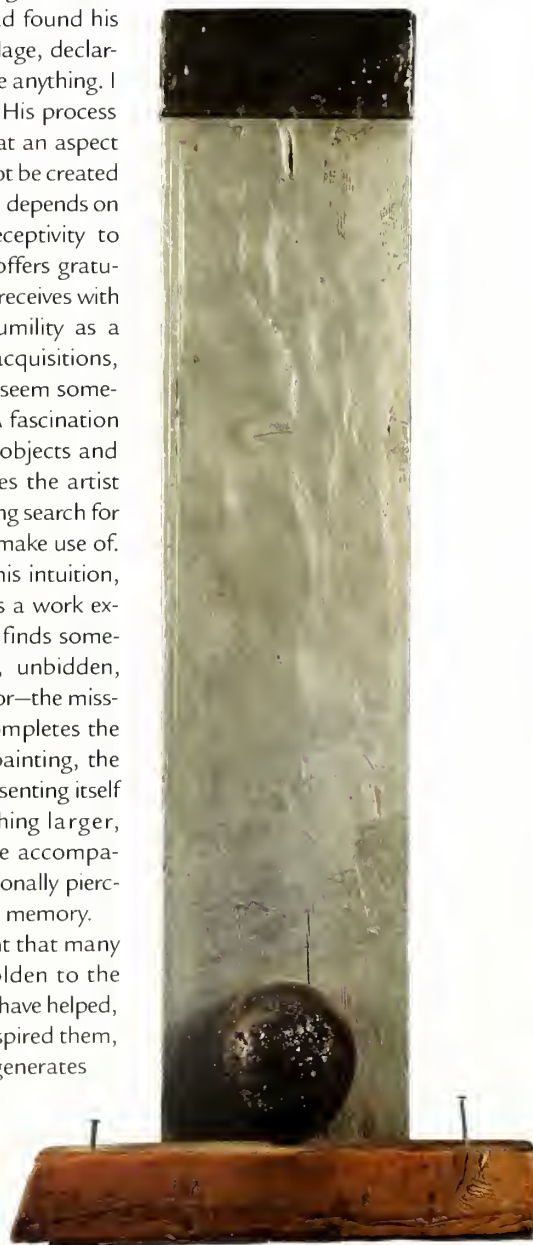
In *Perugia*, one of these works, Boghosian has departed from the black ink of his Orpheus woodcuts and captured the rainbow of colors cascading like sunlight on the glowing houses that rise up along the banks of the river. It is a dazzling display of shimmering vitality, and Boghosian's talent for inspired color play is evident. It is curious that his subsequent work much favors muted colors, as if he became suspicious of the beguilement of vivid color. *The Nile*, an anchor block construction from 1976, plays with the small difference between the pattern of the river flow and the pattern of the earthen banks that contain it.

In 1954 Boghosian returned to America to study with Josef Albers at the Yale School of Art. Albers, like Hensche, was a colorist, especially renowned for his series called *Homage to the Square*. Within squares—a recession of several squares, one inside the other—related hues were bound like something imprisoned. The drama in a work by Albers derives from a compressed tension between antagonistic energy, boxed within. At Yale, Albers told Boghosian that he was "monochromatic," which made Boghosian chuckle. I suspect that what Boghosian learned from Albers was not color but architecture. Boghosian retained Albers's framing device, but abandoned his fresh paint, preferring the patina of paint that is a mere ghost of the original, much faded, the surface pitted with the texture of time. His favorite stone is travertine, which is easily stained by lemon juice, vinegar, tea, or coffee. The surface always seems to be crumbling off in dusty molecules that cling to the oils in your hand. Boghosian finds revelation in the residue of something once new, now transformed by age.

In 1966 Boghosian had his first one-man show of constructions at the H.C.E. Gallery in Provincetown, run by the James Joyce scholar Nat Halper. Although several of Boghosian's future colleagues at Long Point, including Tony Vevers, joined the Sun Gallery, Boghosian was not involved with their group at the time. He remembers Jeanne Bultman—"a beautiful young woman walking up Miller Hill Road." And Weldon Kees, worked in a gallery nearby—"he had this Continental. He was painting at the time, using house paint. I told him I didn't think that was going to last. He said he didn't care. He was publishing poems about a character named Robinson when he disappeared off the Golden Gate Bridge."

Boghosian had found his idiom in assemblage, declaring, "I don't make anything. I find everything." His process acknowledges that an aspect of the work cannot be created by him alone, and depends on alertness and receptivity to what the world offers gratuitously, which he receives with a measure of humility as a simple gift. His acquisitions, rarely costly, can seem sometimes priceless. A fascination with man-made objects and their origins drives the artist on his never-ending search for elements he can make use of. He is guided by his intuition, and seldom does a work excite him until he finds something fortuitous, unbidden, and unplanned for—the missing piece that completes the work. Unlike a painting, the item is real, representing itself as well as something larger, like a love note accompanied by an emotionally piercing token of fond memory.

It is significant that many artists feel beholden to the other artists who have helped, influenced, or inspired them, and this feeling generates



UNTITLED, 1963, WOOD, IRON, SCULPTED METAL, NAILS, 60H BY 30W BY 10D INCHES
HOOD MUSEUM AT DARTMOUTH



MAGRITTE, 1980, GLASS, TIN, WOOD, AND FELT,
12.5H BY 8.75W BY 7D INCHES, COLLECTION OF JOEL MALINOFF

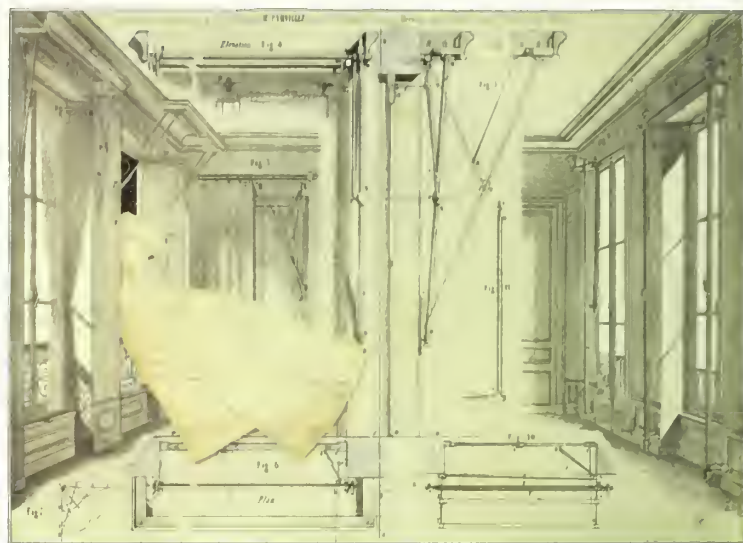
a desire to pass along anonymously what they have received. The acceptance of a gift generally creates an obligation to return. In his brilliantly original *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property* (Random House, 1979), Lewis Hyde discusses this phenomenon in the context of the "capitalist" economy, which hoards treasure for selfish purposes, and the "gift" economy, which amplifies its wealth through sharing. Hyde distinguishes between reciprocal and circular giving: "When

I give to someone from whom I do not receive (and yet I do receive elsewhere), it is as if the gift goes around a corner be-

fore it comes back. I have to give blindly. And I will feel a sort of blind gratitude as well. When a gift moves in a circle its motion is beyond the control of the personal ego, and so each bearer must be part of the group and each donation is an act of social giving." In its widest circumference, such an exchange creates a bond between the dead, the living, and the yet-to-be-born.

Boghosian's constructions almost always integrate what frames them into what would be otherwise isolated for its separate expressive emphasis. His framing devices are architectural environments for display of treasured artifacts, not unlike the reverential placement of a relic in the recess of a stone wall, where the space itself would look holy even if it were empty. Boghosian's effort is to reveal what is missing. His habitual instinct is to reverse what is obvious. If a frame is supposed to be frontal, then he will prefer to expose its back side, showing the wire that would affix the picture to the wall and the hidden braces that square its corners.

Boghosian's own career was becoming cemented and secure in the decades when he showed at Cordier and Ekstrom (1969-1988), his prestigious New York dealer. As he had done with his teachers, so Boghosian



THE BRIDE LEAVES, 1994. MIXED MEDIA, 9 BY 12.5 INCHES

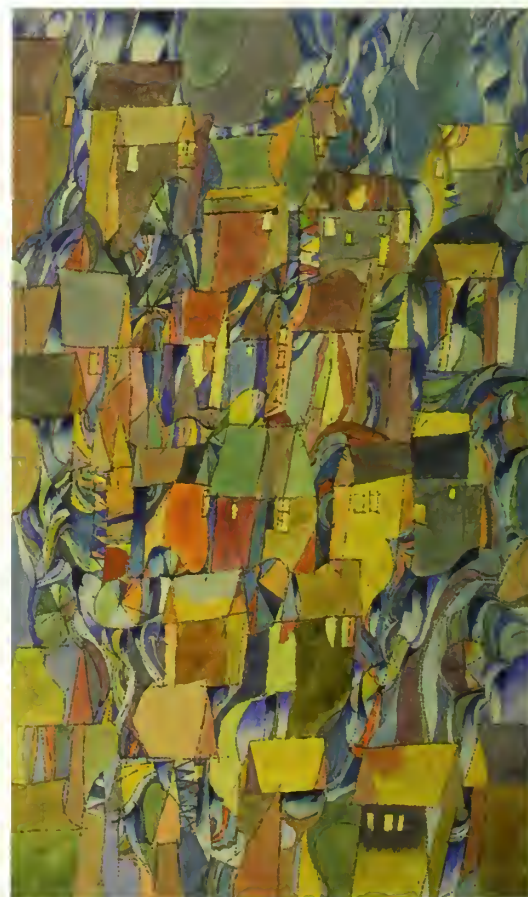
maintained fast bonds with the galleries that took him on. Berta Walker in Provincetown, Irving Luntz in Palm Beach, and Lori Bookstein in New York are presently his principal representatives.

Orpheus (1983) is such a construction that reveals Boghosian's hidden braces. In a double frame, larger than the canvas it encompasses, Boghosian has presented a carved wooden bird in profile as it bursts from a tear in the linen, emerging from behind in some strange act of birth. Something artificial is born through an act of imagination. Frail threads of fabric drape across the bird's stiff tail. Its beak, with a morsel clamped in the crevice, seems to be eating its way out of the cloth, as if the creature were consuming the shell that encased it. A nail, protruding crudely from the breast of the bird, cruelly affixes its body in an inert position, as if it were a kind of martyr whose moment of agony is frozen forever in eternal time.

Another construction, *Orpheus and Eurydice* (1987), imposes two dark hearts on a white paper ground, deeply grooved where the two hearts touch



ORPHEUS, 1983, LINEN, BRONZE, AND WOOD, 13H BY 17W BY 3.5D INCHES



PERUGIA, 1953, INK AND WATERCOLOR ON PAPER, 9.5 BY 4.5 INCHES

each other. A tenuous wire, so thin as to be only faintly visible, lifts out of the groove and lopes across the fine point where the two hearts touch at their narrowest point. The image combines, suggesting a formal, black bow tie against a white tuxedo, or the rapid wings of a butterfly. Something both ceremonial and fleeting is captured at its most evocative instant. A complex range of emotion is compressed in mute simplicity: lyrical joy, rich pathos, and comic surprise. The white ground, foxed and blemished, splotted with watermarks, summons an alternative history that is, so frankly, smudged with regret. What is logical is lost to irony—if “irony” is restricted to the vitality of complex feeling that Boghosian can condense, contain, and capture in the volatile cage of his creations.

The boxes of Joseph Cornell enamored Boghosian, and he made a pilgrimage to Cornell’s house and studio on Utopia Parkway in Queens, New York. Boghosian saw how Cornell lived in his house among his work, stepping over stacks of papers, sorted in piles that one had to navigate. (When Cornell died, his estate returned to Boghosian the same work he had given Cornell on his visit.) Cornell contributed to art history by diminishing the hallowed emptiness of the art museum to its function as a container. Cornell made us understand, in his boxed-in worlds, that the museum itself was a large box with many compartments and closets, which organize cultural artifacts into thematic coherence. Cornell brought his mode of presentation into a relation with its contents. Fragile relics representing fading emotions persist in their fragility, and the weaker the material becomes the more does it exude expressive potency. The box used for storage of discarded objects becomes the place of renewed scrutiny.

The concept of the box as a container for a desired material intrigued Boghosian. Boghosian’s display cases for his embellished hat blocks were deep, square wooden containers, formerly used on a farm to hold the mineral blocks that cows lick for nutrients not otherwise found in their diet. Boghosian obtained several of them at an antique shop in Provincetown for \$10. The tongues of cows are as rough as sandpaper, and the rims of the containers are beautifully contoured from years of incidental licking, smoothing and shaping them with strange artistry. Boghosian was delighted by this conjunction of bovine and the sublime. Is it art because the cow’s tongue shaped the lip of the lick’s container? Or is it art because Boghosian saw what the container could do for the context of the art contained? He was not making packing boxes so much as presenting what had been hidden in packaging.



ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE, 1987, PAPER CONSTRUCTION WITH WIRE, 16H BY 14W BY 1D INCHES

Boghosian’s work exudes the odor of an old thing just ripped apart and releasing its fresh scent, and this kinetic impulse is implicit in Boghosian’s static scenarios, which always seem to be prologues to a performance or a depiction of the high point of the performance itself. In the year Boghosian was born, Marcel Duchamp was working on a piece called *The Large Glass* or *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*, 1926. It is a double-glass contraption that would make Rube Goldberg blush—with romance and courtship treated as if it were purely mechanical. When I asked Boghosian about Duchamp’s influence on his work, he replied, “It’s not so much Duchamp’s work, but the *idea* of Duchamp that I absorbed.”

Boghosian wants to take us to our limits of knowledge, where we must decide when explanation fails and mystery manifests itself. Boghosian was intrigued by what may have caused Magritte to make his eerie paintings of the man with the bowler hat, but without a face. One possible explanation is that Magritte suffered the childhood trauma of seeing his drowned mother being retrieved by rescuers knee-deep in a river. His mother’s face was obscured by a portion of her clothing, and Magritte saw only emptiness. In one of Boghosian’s pieces, *Magritte* (1980), Boghosian fills the airy emptiness beneath the bowler hat with a fluttering butterfly. A number of Boghosian’s works seem to feature people without faces or heads, and people wearing hats. Recent works include *The Bride Dances* (2004), *The Bride Vanishes* (2001), and *Bride and Groom* (2005).

Boghosian’s father, an immigrant cobbler from Armenia, worked in the Fafner Ball Bearing Factory making ball bearings, and the spherical shapes reappear in many works by the son. The multiple meanings its shape suggests depend crucially on how they are used in tandem with other elements. Boghosian’s father, something of a bricoleur himself, spent some hours evenings and weekends repairing the family’s shoes. He sat before an anvil and tapped rhythmically into the leather soles. He kept a handful of the little nails he used in his mouth, plucking them one by one, and keeping up a musical pattern that was pleasant for the son to listen to.

His father had fled the atrocities of the Armenian genocide, passing on stories of astonishing cruelty. Recently, a Boghosian image



NIGHT AND DAY (ORPHEUS AND PLUTO), 1963, WOOD AND STEEL, 12H BY 12W BY 7.25D INCHES
COLLECTION OF WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, NEW YORK



ABOVE: PAUL RESIKA AND VARUJAN BOGHOSIAN, 1990 PHOTO © BLAIR RESIKA
BELOW: *THE MEDALLION*, 1965, WOOD, IVORY, CLOTH, 47 INCHES IN DIAMETER BY 3 INCHES, WILLIAMS COLLEGE OF ART

graced the cover of a book by the poet Charles Simic, born in war-torn Belgrade, who writes in *The Monster Loves His Labyrinth* (Ausable Press) about his boyhood disillusionment with war: "The occupiers everywhere, I note, are outraged by the bad manners of the occupied that do nothing but complain about being mistreated." Such humor in the face of horror is also typical of Boghosian. His father's escape caused his lucky son to be born. No doubt the dire nature of these stories affected Boghosian strongly. Perhaps his recent work *Genocide* (1997-99) was inspired by his father's experiences?

Night and Day (Orpheus and Pluto), 1963, is one of several pieces Boghosian fashioned from hat blocks, in which portions of the crown are darkened with hundreds of small brads with wide heads, giving it some kind of variation on a Mohawk haircut. The shape of the hat block naturally echoes the shape of the human skull, and Boghosian's memento mori moves us even more to honor life.

In Boghosian's ancient theater, a key role is played by Charon, who ferries the dead across the River Styx into the moldy gloom of Hades. He is represented in classical portraits as nasty, short, and brutish, with a crooked nose and misshapen ears. In mythology, and in Boghosian's sculptures that allude to him, he is often depicted wearing the conical hat that Greek fishermen wear even today as an efficient means to shed sea spray and rain in their open boats. This hat is also associated with dunces, jugglers, and the entertainers of the Italian *commedia dell'arte*, including the clown Punchinello.

Like any professional, Charon expected some compensation for his valuable service. He liked the coin to be placed in the shade's mouth, for the security the mouth offered, with its encasing teeth being the hardest substance in the body. The token was the price of passage. Without the obligation of an object, there could be no crossing. The unburied body would slosh for a century in the shallows of River Styx. Charon would always pole between the waterlogged remains of dead souls cluttering the channel; routinely his beat-up boat thudded against their soggy thickness.

In the black humor of the ugly oarsman, Boghosian embeds the forgotten final irony that we must pay for our own funeral. Some token must grant our passage.

Boghosian served in the navy following high school, spending two years in the Pacific working the radar on a troop transport ship. Perhaps the characteristic sweep of light across a circular map was imprinted in Boghosian's mind as a way of seeing objects out of one's range of vision. Radar is effective day or night and in bad weather, much like the echolocation of bats, which use sound to "see." A series of concentric circles, one inside the other, appear in many works in the artist's career, offering a recurrent image of a conceptual world outside our range of perception.

One piece, *The Medallion* (1966), is itself an enormous, round, wooden token, fashioned to resemble the dual tracks of a set of ball bearings, in which one circular raceway spins and the other is fixed. Watching a set of ball bearings roll in rotation is to witness something of a juggling act. It reminds me of the way Boghosian has used marbled paper to suggest the turbulence of water. It could stand in the center of his studio, like the magic curtain of *The Wizard of Oz*.

Truly, it is a roulette wheel, meant to be spun and for its round bearings to be slotted in a secure track. The balls apparently slip so efficiently through their raceway that they seem to achieve a liquid coefficient, their interaction causing no friction.

A "myth" may not be something that is not true. It may be opposite: a myth may be true in the way that Aristotle said that poetry was not truth but "something like truth." Boghosian finds fulfillment in his knowledge that the token can also be a tribute for the privilege of passing back and forth between eternal and fleeting knowledge. How do we record the passing of vivid life? Wallace Stevens declared, "Death is the mother of beauty; hence from her, / Alone, shall come fulfillment to our dreams / And our desires." With equal profundity, D. H. Lawrence reminded us that "All vital truth contains the memory of all that for which it is not true."

Have we forgotten to connect Robert Frost's words to his belated observer? Frost wrote in his poem "The Oven Bird" what Boghosian learned in his life's work, which is that there is a singer in every existence who knows in singing not to sing, and rather ask:

*The question that he frames in all but words
Is what to make of a diminished thing.*

A token is a substitute for currency, and is valuable only for a restricted use. We give others tokens of appreciation when we are sincere. We give small tokens to those we love. We give some object we have touched to another, passing on the memento as a thing of value. A token is a metaphor, standing both for itself and the feeling it embodies. The Greek origin of metaphor is the verb *move*. Our language, our art, has taught us this trick: how the real is separated from its symbol just as the self is from its soul. Myth is our main method of reifying the abstract into a tangible object, and this is why Boghosian has always said and felt, "Myth is real to me."

CHRISTOPHER BUSA is editor of Provincetown Arts.



Wilderness/Bewilderment

AMY ARBUS AND THE SUBLIME

By Nick Flynn

Amy Arbus first entered my consciousness in the 1980s, when the *Village Voice* was still the most exciting publication around, when New York still seemed able to absorb anyone who couldn't fit in anywhere else (this was before the commodification of New York, before the triumph of Trump and Paris). Arbus's photographs of street fashion from those years (collected in her book *On the Street 1980–1990*), were, even for a ragamuffin like me, who thought he cared nothing for fashion, thrilling. They revealed a world full of endless possibility—we could be anyone.



Alan Cumming as Dionysus, *The Bacchae*, 2008

In *On the Street*, Arbus was photographing people who dressed to become themselves. Arbus's work on these pages is an extension of an ongoing project, collected in her book *The Fourth Wall*, where she photographs people who dress to become someone else. Actors—some onstage, some offstage—in character, yet not, at this moment, in the play. Not acting, not exactly, but not not-acting either. Not themselves, but not not-themselves. Something in-between, like the moment between dream and waking, like the moment before the curtain rises, or the moment just after the curtain has come down.

When you are working, everybody is in your studio—the past, your friends, the art world, and above all your own ideas—all are there. But as you continue painting, they start leaving, one by one, and you are left completely alone. Then, if you are lucky, even you leave.

—Philip Guston, quoting John Cage



Lili Taylor as Christine Mannon, *Mourning Becomes Electra*, 2009

A question arises, as to where the character ends, and the person begins, but this is true for all of us, isn't it? Or maybe I'm simply talking about (or to) myself again.

An artist photographing other artists could risk becoming akin to a snake swallowing its own tail. Arbus, though—somehow—pushes into the unknown, into the mystery, not just of theater, but of the self. Of who we are, of who we could be.

Artists don't wonder, "What is it good for?" They aren't driven to "create art," or to "help people," or to "make money." They are driven to lessen the burdens of the unbearable disparity between their conscious and unconscious minds, and so to achieve peace.

—David Mamet, *Three Uses of the Knife*



Christian Jacobs as Guiderius, *Cymbeline*, 2008

At the theater one is (hopefully) able to be subsumed into another world, and at the end, when the curtain falls and you step out of the darkened theater into the artificially lit city, it all seems transformed. Yet it's only, it must be only, you.

It's interesting to cut yourself into pieces once in awhile, and wait to see if the fragments will sprout.

—T. S. Eliot, in a letter to Conrad Aiken

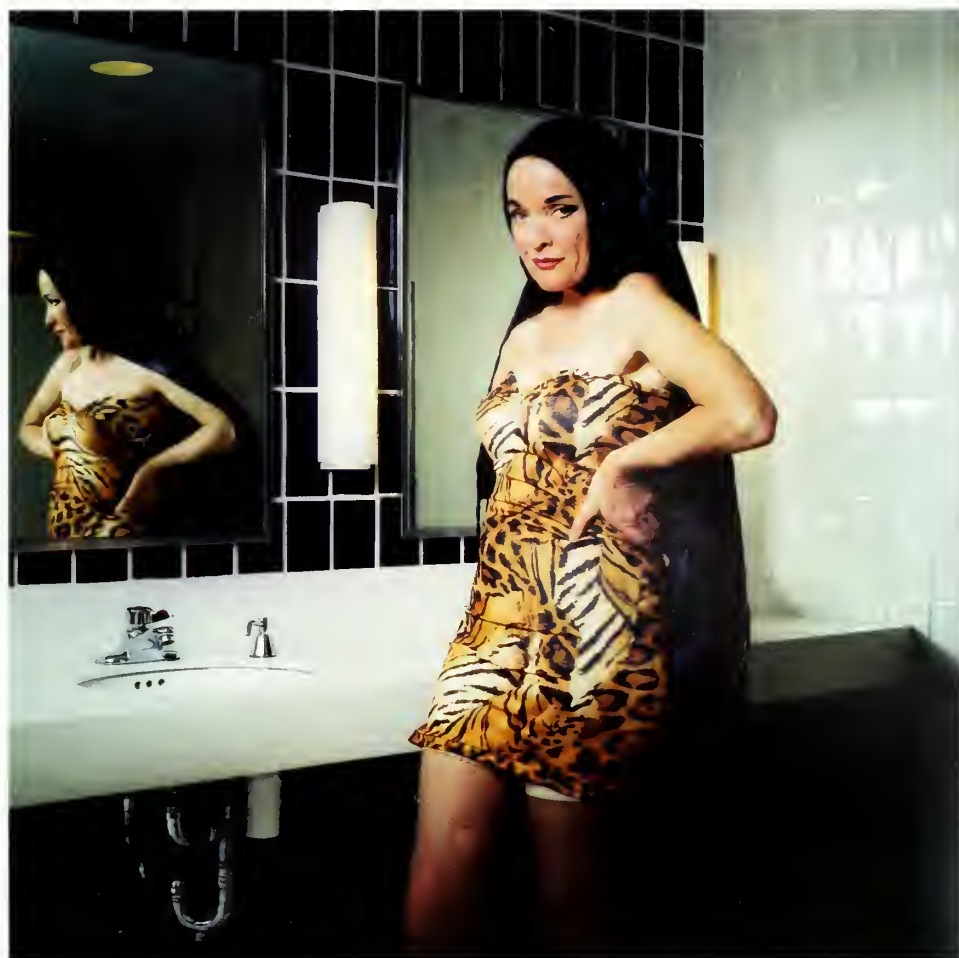
AMY ARBUS, a New York-based photographer, has published four books, including the award-winning *On the Street 1980–1990* and *The Inconvenience of Being Born*. *The New Yorker* calls her most recent book, *The Fourth Wall*, her masterpiece. Her photographs have appeared in over one hundred periodicals around the world, including the *New Yorker*, *People*, *Dazed and Confused*, and the *New York Times Magazine*. She has had twenty-one solo exhibitions worldwide, and her photographs are a part of the collection of the New York Public Library and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The photos pictured here will be featured in her exhibition at the Schoolhouse Gallery in Provincetown from August 21 to September 9.

**Christine Ebersole as Little Edie Beale,
Grey Gardens, 2006**

The more I look at these photographs the more sublime they become. Longinus claims that the sublime cannot identify itself only to what is simply beautiful, but also to what is so upsetting as to cause “bewilderment” (ΕΚΠΛΗΞΙΣ), “surprise” (ΤΟ ΘΑΥΜΑΣΤΟΝ), and even “fear” (ΦΟΒΟΣ). I’ve been thinking about the concept of bewilderment for a few years now, coming as we are, as a people, out of a type of darkness, likely generated by fear, where those we assumed were in charge merely sent their own shadows into press conferences, to say absolutely nothing, and the press, their parrots, somehow felt it was enough to repeat these nothings (*bewilderment*, 1684, Anglo Saxon: from the verb *to wilder*: to lead someone into the woods and get them lost).

I said, “I am an artist,” which I won’t take back, because it’s self-evident that what that word implies is looking for something all the time without ever finding it in full.

—Vincent van Gogh, in a letter to Theo



**Michael Cerveris as Wilson
Mizner, *Road Show*, 2008**

An actor, while acting, pushes himself to that precipice where he is (almost) ready to fall, where he is (almost) ready to lose himself utterly, and somehow must pull himself back from it, night after night. These photographs capture a group of actors on the lip of this precipice, about to step into it. When does the character take over, when is it ever put away? How often do any of us glimpse our essential selves, outside of the role we’ve been playing? Or, as Lear says, “Who is it can tell me who I am?”

There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical.

—Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*



NICK FLYNN is the author of *Another Bullshit Night in Suck City* (a memoir), and *Alice Invents a Little Game* and *Alice Always Wins* (a play), as well as two books of poetry. For many years he lived on a boat in Provincetown Harbor, but he now lives in Brooklyn, with Lili Taylor and their daughter Maeve.

Robert Henry

ART IS ART AND EVERYTHING ELSE IS EVERYTHING ELSE

By Christopher Busa

BOB HENRY'S stellar, spare, and elegant exhibition last summer at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum, "Stop, Look and Listen," was specifically titled in order to bring the auditory into the visual. The high-ceilinged Richmond Gallery, with its angled clerestory skylights, created a hushed atmosphere where silences spoke. Curated by Peter Watts, the exhibition was less a broad retrospective than a focused survey of the best paintings the artist had done in the last fifteen years. Berta Walker, whose gallery has represented Henry for many years, was also instrumental in making the astute selections. But this hanging represents the artist's vision, and was exceptional for what it revealed about his self-assessment. Included were several major triple-panel paintings done in the past two years. He also included several works done outside the specified years of the show: two early triptychs and one quintiptych from 1959-61, made at the very beginning of his professional career. In the inclusion of these pieces, Henry made clear that the late triptychs did not come out of nowhere. Their introduction offered the context for his concluding works, being a purposeful prologue and a foreshadowing of his initial interest in the multi-panel form.

Attending Brooklyn College in the early fifties, he met Selina Trieff, an artist as well; the two took classes from Ad Reinhardt, and Selina studied with Mark Rothko. Henry and Trieff were fortunate to be exposed to artists participating on the forefront of the Abstract Expressionist movement. After they graduated and married, the couple stayed close to Reinhardt and received postcards of his doings while he was traveling. A key element of the Ab-Ex ethos was the artist's absolute commitment to painting. Reinhardt always maintained, "Art is art, and everything else is everything else." Henry and Trieff became honed, like their mentors, by humble daily devotion to living fully as artists. Before they bought a house in Wellfleet in the early nineties, they summered for years on Martha's Vineyard, where Selina, who grew up in a home without pets, began sketching the uncanny likeness that farm animals shared with humans. Their dog Louie became hilarious in any posture. (See my article "Selina Trieff: A Wise Menagerie," *Provincetown Arts* 2007.)

On a windless day last December, I drove to Wellfleet to visit Henry in his studio, which overlooks Duck Creek, a tidal inlet and salt marsh that has become invaded by phragmites, some over six feet tall. The water was frozen and the reeds poked out of the ice, their tops feathery and, in the still air, utterly without motion. They appeared against the background of a blue sky heated by a winter sun, so the blue was wan from lack of heat. They were so calligraphic in the vacuum air that they jolted me



RAY ELMAN, *GIBSON (ROBERT HENRY)*, 2007, OIL AND DIGITAL COLLAGES ON CANVAS, 40 BY 60 INCHES

into thinking of Bob Henry's Chinese scrolls, which I had seen last summer at the Berta Walker Gallery. The Walker scrolls were another dimension of the artist not included in the museum exhibition.

While Selina's studio occupies the first floor, Henry works upstairs in a large, meandering space on the second floor, moving from area to area for painting, sketching, or playing the guitar, which he's been strumming for about five years. A sitting area and a small kitchen extend the space. We began chatting about Hofmann, and Henry showed me some drawings that Hofmann made by using wooden matchsticks dipped in ink; the line made by the blunt tip is intriguingly erratic and irregular. On a table were large coffee cans storing cleaned brushes; several held dozens of turkey and seagull feathers, their quills cut at a slant and notched to use as ink pens. The Magna Carta and the Declaration of Independence were written with quill pens. Rembrandt used quills to inflect with tiny strokes the light that shines in his shadows. As a student, Henry had copied from books reproductions of Rembrandt's drawings, and he told me, "In some of the ink drawings, I took a piece of string and attached it to the end of a brush. That's what I'm drawing with now, the string at the end of the brush. You can't control it. No way of controlling it. It may be some equivalent of Pollock's floor paintings. You can control it to some extent, but there is a willful giving up of control."

I've always been puzzled by the need of artists to add an element to their process that calls for some suspension of their conscious will, some element of unknowing. They seem to tie one hand behind their back in order to give more freedom to the other. A new instrument requires a beginner's mind, grappling with fundamentals, and the artist that was an expert becomes an innocent acquainting himself

with the quirky qualities of fresh expression. Almost instinctively, I often notice, the artist contrives a situation where it's difficult enough to be interesting, and not so easy as to be boring. It's a leveling, a balance, seeking a mood of intrigue and possessing a compulsion to continue exploring.

Following the applause of last summer's exhibitions, Henry began doing a series of gouaches and drawings on uniform sheets of paper, "looking for new subjects."

Quiet returns to the ears of the artist when commotion has passed. An exhibition, late in an artist's career, is by its nature a moment of summary, provoking the conceptual challenge of drawing a thread from some part of the summary that wasn't developed sufficiently in the past. In a slide talk that Henry gave at the Art Association during his show, he remarked:

You have to set your own rules. I find, when I teach, I frequently refer to music. You can go as far as singing, though I don't sing particularly well. Or talking about musical color instrumentation—I'll talk about a color in a particular painting and say, "That seems very brassy to me. I can see trumpets in it. Over there, this passage sounds like brushes on a drum." Those experiences are very real to me in visual art. I've done paintings where listening is the subject matter, for example, a guy with big ears, holding his ears to make them wider. It's a form of paying attention.

Selina's figures, I've discovered recently, are almost always looking at you. The story is their relationship to the viewer. They have a relationship to each other in that they're looking at the viewer differently. Whereas in mine, if they're figures, they are relating to each other, not to the viewer.

His most poignant canvas may be *Selina, Wellfleet, Winter*, 2000. Before his wife, with whom he had raised two children, became needful of a walker to assist her motion, Henry was making his so-called “kinetic paintings,” round as an LP record, suspended by a string from the ceiling: by physically twisting the strings, which regenerate motion as they unwind and rewind, the paintings were made to rotate. The sense of being groundless, falling, or floating developed in Henry each night when he went to bed and looked above at the painting slightly behind him. From his upside-down point of view, the painting, he said, became “more spatial. I started doing the round paintings, which I didn’t originally conceive of as rotating. But they forced me to look from an angle and get rid of perspective. I wanted to look at it from any angle. I hung it up, saw that it rotated, and said, ‘Wow.’”

In this portrait of his wife’s back as she gazes out the window upon Duck Creek, the light breaks in upon her like a cloud of silver dust, enhancing the sense of a radiant epiphany. Henry incorporates the point of view he took as an artist, but also one that includes what his subject observed, so that Henry’s own observation seems to manifest what his wife witnessed. Much of the power of this painting results from its involuntary expression of deep love for the woman still breathing, dreaming, and sitting simply before him.

Working in a studio flooded with Wellfleet illumination, refracted off the tidal flats, Henry often gets a blast of strong light in the morning, arresting his attention. The odd intensity and searching quality of the light, filtered through a horizontal spread of windowpanes, acts like a theater scrim, becoming opaque or transparent depending upon the angle in which the light is directed. He told me, “In the evening, just before sunset, when the sun is low and is hitting the houses—it stops me almost every time.”

Hofmann taught that movement and action are the qualities that animate a painting; he insisted on kinetic energy in the picture plane. Activity is what attracts the eye into having an experience in looking at a painting. Activity is experi-

ence, and art is about having something happen in the boundary of specific space. Henry seems inclined to push beyond the boundary by enlarging the space with additional units of bound space. Perhaps, in a divergence prompted by Hofmann’s teachings, Henry is drawn to spread the activity, not within a single frame, but expanded in a series. The series has become his signature way of exploring a theme.

The variety of Henry’s paintings can be organized within the themes he explored over a lifetime. In putting together a comprehensive CD of his works in 2002, Henry grouped them under these titles: cars and trucks, city scenes, couples, earth and knowledge, ego, family, games, have and have-nots, light side/dark side, innocence, interiors, isolation, kids, kinetic paintings, landscapes, martyrdom, nudes, performers, portraits, scrolls, touching, water, windows, women and men, abstractions, activities, anger, aspirations.

Henry’s instinct was to go back to the religious moment as a place of sacred ceremony where the altarpiece in a church was surrounded by a triptych, with the flanking panels acting as supplemental stories supporting the main story. I asked Henry about his five-part work *Quintitych* from 1959; its uniqueness and early aspiration seemed a nodal point worth pursuing. Henry said while we sat: “In my abstract paintings, I found I did not feel it was my own enough. I always had the impulse to search for something different. Since I felt

limited composing on a single canvas, I wondered what would happen if I added canvases to it.” I noted that his *Quintitych* is really a cross with a square cut out of the middle, and Henry replied:

For both forms, if you look at it historically, there is both a center piece and side pieces. You don’t read it left to right, as you read a story. You read the middle and find what supports it on the sides. If you look back at Renaissance altarpieces, where there are multiple paintings, there is always a central



BRAVO II, 1998, OIL ON CANVAS, 56 BY 56 INCHES

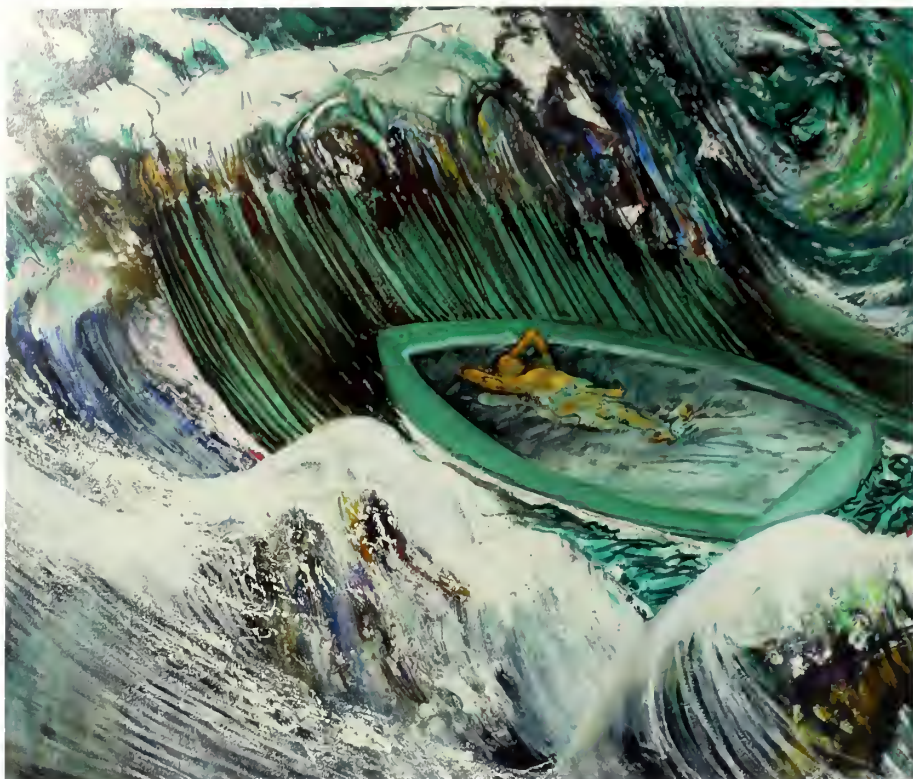
image that is most important. There is Christ in the middle and the donors on the side, or the angels, or what have you. That’s very much in my head when I work with this form. At the same time, I realize we are not anymore in the Renaissance. We are a freer society—freer to look at things in any order we want. So when you look at my multiples, you are aware that the center is historically more important—yet you can read it left to right, right to left, and you can hop around. What makes it different from a single painting is that there are these stops between one image and another, so it’s not continuous.

Both Henry and Trieff work from the self and the unconscious, aware that artists labor in the happy isolation of their studios. Henry explained:

I suppose we each have a feeling about that isolation, and want to record our own lives, starting with abstract principles. Early on, we both were abstract painters, very involved with the construction of the painting. I think we are both trying to talk about ourselves as examples of humankind. In my *Bravo* series—only one is in the show at PAAM—it came from a particular experience watching a Pavarotti concert on television. At the end of the performance, he was in the middle of the stage in the spotlight with everybody just madly applauding. It ran through my head that as a visual artist, that tends not to happen. So, in a Freudian wish fulfillment, I said I was going to do a painting where I make myself the center of attention, and take bows while people are applauding. Of course, in the actual painting, things come out, which you don’t intend. So there are two aspects. There are people applauding you, but you are separated from them. The painting talks about how you want response from an audience, but the response is never fulfilling enough. It’s really not about



SELINA, WELLFLEET, WINTER, 2000, OIL ON CANVAS, 32 BY 36 INCHES



BE CALMED, 1998, OIL ON CANVAS, 42 BY 50 INCHES

the reception that you get. It's about doing the work. The prime pleasure gets reinforced again and again: the prime pleasure of painting is painting, not applause.

Henry is supremely conscious of the input of his unconscious will, struggling to reconcile itself with his conscious impulses as a painter. The concept of applause summons the exciting presence of the performer, who is separated from the audience by the invisible "fourth wall" of theatrical pretense: the ancient convention that the audience can see the actors, but the actors can't see the audience.

Henry pondered the issue in his painting. He began to talk about what happens when you look at a painting from its side, and recounted this incident:

The last time I was in New York I went to the Met to look at Morandi. After I did, I wandered around the museum and thought I would go to the Oriental wing, which I hadn't seen in a while. I had no specific thing I wanted to see. Then I glimpsed in passing a twenty-foot-long scroll. I look at it and—damn! If it is not absolutely three-dimensional, almost an IMAX space, where the foreground is the foreground, the middle ground is the middle ground, and the background is the background. I stopped short, totally shocked at what was happening in this painting. The artist had painted the wagon wheel in the shape of an ellipse, as it would have been seen from an angle, rather than round.

Henry was viewing the long horizontal unfurled scrolls of the seventeenth-century Chinese scroll-painter Wang Hui, who explored the potential of the infinitely expandable hand-scroll format, translating long journeys through dramatic vistas

into towering calligraphic abstractions. Wang Hui wrote, "I must use the brush and ink of the Yuan to move the peaks and valleys of the Song, and infuse them with the breath-resonance of the Tang." In the revelation of his angle of observation, Henry saw the wagon wheel as if it were three dimensional, not two dimensional.

Henry's *Wish Fulfillment* appears in the exhibition catalogue in the spread that includes the painting of the bow in *Bravo*. This time the bow is one of shame, where a man getting his wish fulfilled looks ashamed, downtrodden, as if to say, "I am so embarrassed to be happy." The whole crowd is clapping and smiling. Henry has produced this disjunction: the person being celebrated seems to suffer the occasion as humiliation.

Shame and celebration are connected by established social ritual, most clear at high levels of courtesy, where protocol is strictly enforced by long traditions. Henry saw this in the long shadow of Pavarotti taking that final bow, pretending to be humble: "One bows to the king and queen, before God, as if to say, humble me, I really don't deserve

this. That's what the bow is about. Though I didn't do that consciously, I realize now that it's pretense."

Most artists sense that vanity will destroy the value of their gift, and therefore shun self-congratulation, however much they may crave recognition. Henry was influenced by a particularly powerful teacher, who seasoned him into becoming a colleague. Henry never wanted to become Hofmann, and Hofmann didn't want his students to become Hofmanns. He wanted the artists to be more completely who they were already. If Hofmann's speech was very Germanic, Henry remained cognizant because he had studied a bit of German in school and was acquainted with Yiddish, which has similar constructions.

Hofmann was famous for punctuating his points with the German *Nicht wahr*, meaning "Is it not true?"—uttered calmly or with thundering emphasis as either a period or an exclamation point, but very seldom as a real question. Henry said, "Occasionally, he would use a word that was not the actual word, but a variation of it. But you knew what he meant. The difficult things to understand were his concepts, not his language. He always talked about spirituality—it was so important to him, and very important to me and to Selina, that the act of painting is not a materialist act, but a spiritual communication."

Henry's late triptychs deal with discrete narrative aspects of a key image seen from alternative points of view: one scene from the vantage of an onlooker's glance, another from a cosmic overview of a distant vortex, a third that clarifies the theme of the previous panels, such as two hands grasping each other in the act of supporting someone falling.

Many of Henry's paintings have these tentative, emotional moments—ranging from anxiety to strange buoyancy implicit in his sinking figures, especially his paintings of people floundering in



WISH FULFILLMENT, 1997, OIL ON CANVAS, 56 BY 56 INCHES



AFTER HOMER, 1998, OIL ON CANVAS, 40 BY 72 INCHES

swamped boats. In *Be Calmed* (1998) a female form is supine in a vaulting Japanese sea and diminutive as huge waves tower above her slim, open boat; the sliver of her boat is like an eyelid protecting the eye with its long lashes. She is very relaxed with both arms bent to allow her hands to cup her head. The boat seems to protect the person in the water-filled boat from the big waves splashing around the vessel. Calm prevails in the center of the storm.

Henry has a painting called *After Homer* (1998), referring to Winslow Homer and not the author of the *Iliad*. Seldom does Henry use a literary reference. Henry's sources were paintings and sketches that Homer produced in 1872, showing versions of an ancient game called "snap the whip," which served as titles for key paintings. It helps to be young to play this game. In Brueghel's version of *Crack the Whip* (1560), the healthy adults hold on to each other's clothes, belts, or hands, linking each other, while the "leader" tries to shake them off like a bucking bronco, moving unpredictably and breaking links in the chain behind him.

Henry's version of Homer's painting, with its medieval sources of this ancient game even preceding Brueghel, has the greatest tug at the center; the snake end on the left has become a tumbling cascade of jumbled bodies, and the solid "post" at the right is a tall man and a muscled woman in his arms, holding back the turbulence of the whip snapping or crackling at its most flexible joint. Although Henry always went back and forth between abstract and representational painting, the eloquence of what could be said abstractly eluded him. What Hofmann urged his students

to do was to find a new way of composing and dividing the space. Henry said, "To this day, when I teach, I say there is no difference between painting and composition. Composition is not an added quality if you go directly to the primary sources, which is what I do and which is what allows my own feelings to come out. Images I never consciously intended have resonance. My method of working allows me to go to that fundamental well."

Surprise happens, inevitably, naturally, organically, happily, when the artist does not know what he is after. Henry explained:

I always start with a physical feeling to generate something to develop. Something develops from it. I never know before I start where it's going to go. I'm always trying to do something different. Some people say my paintings are too different, one from another. I think they're too similar. The experience I have is that things recur in different guise, over and over, and they have to do with vulnerability.

A lot of my paintings have to have humor in them. I did a painting because somebody was curating a show of nude self-portraits.

They asked me to be in the show. It has two titles. One is *Ground Bob Day* (1986) and the other is *Emerging Artist*.

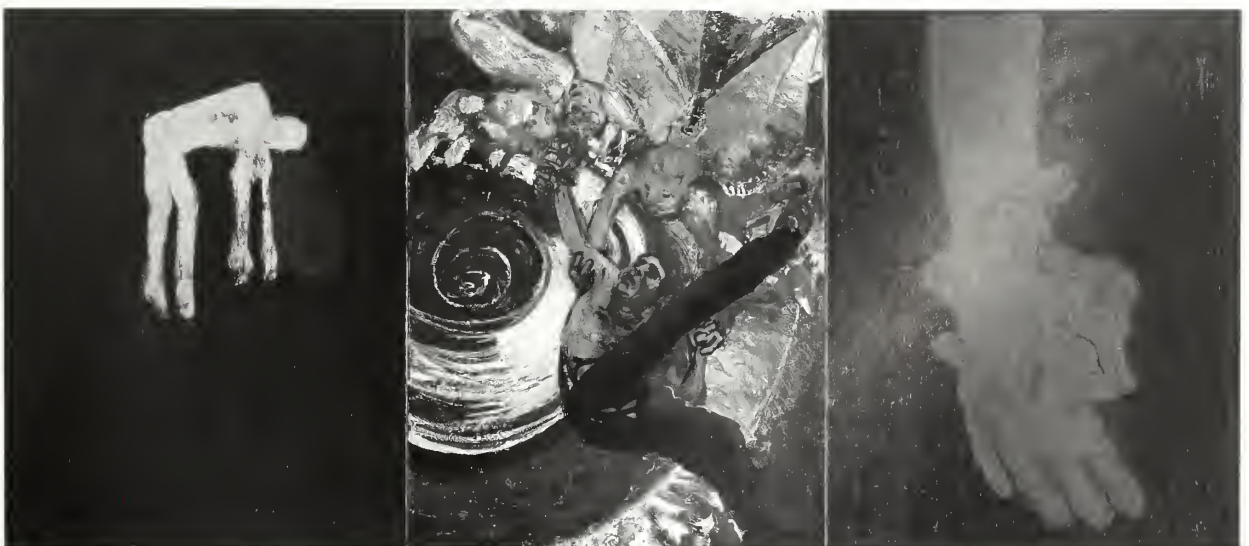
In this portrait Henry depicts himself as a newborn protruding like a periscope out of a Wellfleet bog. The fulfillment in the Mona Lisa smile on his face, in its enigma, shows he is confident and full of promise. Naked in a field, he's half submerged to his knees. He looks bewildered, as if he'd just been born, like a gopher coming out of a hole. People sometimes say Henry has no style, or that having too many styles obscures the artist's signature, but let us ponder what Picasso said about the nature of creation: "God created the giraffe, the zebra, the elephant, and the rabbit. He had no real style."

Suddenly Henry said to me, "I have a whole series of paintings that you don't know about, but should. They are called *Internal Self-Portraits*. One time, looking for the next subject matter, and going through a period of discouragement, I sat there and considered that I would paint what I physically felt at that moment. I did a painting about the inside of my skull, the way my chest felt, the way it felt to sit down."

These self-portraits, so self-revealing, were done during the 1970s. *Seated Self-Portrait* is a U-shape organizing the face, and the simplicity made me think that this was what Henry admired about Matisse.

"More and more," he said. "I'm naturally complex, even though, these days, I try very hard to be simple. You can feel your body, but you can't feel your brain. So, somewhere above the eyes, there's emptiness. You can feel your nose, you can feel your throat, you can feel your stomach—you can feel everything, but you can't feel your brain. It's an interesting challenge, as in that seated portrait: I'm trying to paint an image of me from the inside. What's the point of view? Where am I? Unanswerable."

CHRISTOPHER BUSA is editor of Provincetown Arts.



NEED FOR HELP, 2006, OIL ON CANVAS, 40 BY 90 INCHES

Narrative Bodies

THE ART OF TABITHA VEVERS

By Rachel Rosenfield Lafo

IF PAINTING can be considered an act of devotion, then Tabitha Vever's exquisitely rendered, intimate works of art are offerings, secular attempts to connect with the spiritual.

They propose a different way of thinking about our relationship to the planet and to each other. These provocative images conjure up imaginary worlds, where mythic heroines engage in life's battles, female characters throughout history are reexamined, people enact their dreams of flying, and postapocalyptic creatures seek to survive in an environment ravaged by human abuse and negligence.

Vevers is one of a number of contemporary artists who look back to look forward, mining styles, formats, techniques, characters, and subjects from art history, history, and popular culture to craft a singular vision from the perspective of a contemporary woman. Among her wide-ranging sources are illuminated manuscripts, pre-Renaissance and Renaissance paintings, Indian miniatures, Mexican ex-voto paintings, and the more obscure traditions of scrimshaw, eye portraiture, and painted Japanese shells. Vever may borrow a pose from a fifteenth-century painting or paint on ivory in the miniature tradition because of her admiration for the historical canon, but she does so because she finds the devotional and narrative

aspect of her sources to be particularly meaningful. Over the years she has developed a distinctive style that blends old master techniques with contemporary content to represent a "... point where the deeply personal meets up with what's going on in the world."¹

The exhibition "Tabitha Vever: Narrative Bodies" includes artwork made over a twenty-year period, from the late 1980s to the present. Shifts in format and theme reflect events in Vever's life as well as those in the world at large. Drawn in by the precious quality of the paintings, their intimate scale and beguiling materials, we may be surprised by their subject matter. The artist unflinchingly confronts such controversial topics as violence toward and by women, fertility, sexuality, AIDS, religion, war, cloning, and global warming. Yet, despite their edgy subject matter, these paintings do not preach. Instead they pose questions, sound a note of caution, and even offer a glimmer of hope. As Vever's protagonists engage in strange and wondrous adventures, they encounter, as we all do in our lives, agony and ecstasy, pain and pleasure, and disillusionment and transcendence.

It must have seemed natural for Vever, who hails from a distinguished family of artists, to follow a career in art. Her father, Tony Vever, was

a well-known painter, art educator, writer, and curator, and her mother, Elspeth Halvorsen, is an exhibiting sculptor. She spent her early years in Provincetown, Massachusetts, and even when the family moved first to North Carolina and then to Indiana for her father's teaching positions, they continued to spend summers in the quirky, bohemian art town at the tip of Cape Cod. This lifelong connection with the Cape accounts for the ebb and flow of the sea in her artwork and her use of materials and techniques such as painting on shells and scrimshaw. She talks about the coast as a place "... where land meets the sea—the known and the unknown, a source of life and a source of mystery, mostly nurturing (sometimes dangerous) ... also womb-like, a place where we can literally immerse ourselves in nature. Our bodies are mostly water. It is also the environment that I grew up within and is thus deeply familiar."²

After graduating from Yale University in 1978 with a degree in painting, Vever soon relocated to Boston, where she set up a studio and joined the Bromfield Gallery, an artist's cooperative. In the newfound privacy of her studio, she transitioned from the abstract work of her college years to figurative paintings that progressively became smaller, increasingly detailed, and more narrative. These paintings led to those she later called *Secular Icons*, made after she moved back to Provincetown in the mid-1980s. Inspired by pre-Renaissance paintings she had seen in Italy, Vever began to paint with oil and gold leaf, first on cement to reference fresco paintings, and later on wood panels. She acknowledges that her "... work has always been steeped in [pre-Renaissance] imagery. You see it in the gold leaf and saturated color, the level of detail and the slight awkwardness of the figure."³ It may seem ironic that someone who was raised outside of organized religion—her parents did not allow her to attend church—should use devotional formats and symbols to express her worldview. In the Vever family, art was the religion, but nevertheless it was in religious paintings that Vever found an emotional and narrative style to express timeless human dilemmas.⁴

Like many female artists educated in the 1970s, Vever was quick to realize that art-history texts were full of images of women painted by male artists, but included few paintings by women artists. Following the lead of a number of feminist artists working at the time, by the mid-1980s Vever had determined to take back control of representations of women and their bodies. She "... focused primarily on the female nude out of a desire to reclaim the female figure from art history and to celebrate women's sexuality, strength, and complexity from a woman's perspective."⁵



WHI N'WI TALK ABOUT RAPE, 1992, OIL AND GOLD LEAF ON HANDMADE PAPER, 9.75 BY 12.5 INCHES.
DEI A HERMAN AND ELLEN KUSHNER

The female protagonists in these *Secular Icons* are powerful Amazonian figures who survive despite life's challenges. In paintings like *The Art of Survival*, 1989, and *Lightening the Load*, 1991, archetypal young women, wearing little or no clothing, rise out of the water like sea goddesses, carrying burdens on their shoulders and backs. Vevers's strong yet vulnerable women struggle with issues of personal freedom and succeed in overcoming and learning from adversity. In *The Art of Survival*, the image of an anchor tied around the neck of the woman exemplifies her bravery and perseverance in the face of daunting odds. Vevers writes that not only would the woman "... not drown, but she would rise from the water with a wonderful fish—the bounty of the sea—a rebirth of sorts. ... She would not only survive, she would thrive."⁶ In another *Secular Icon*, *The Cure (A Novella)*, 1993, Vevers adopts the shallow picture plane, theatrical tableaux, shaped frame, and diptych format of an altarpiece. The diptych, a hinged panel painted on both sides, presents two different scenes. When the panel is closed, we see a young woman's chaotic bedroom through an illusionistically painted window. As she tosses and turns in her sleep, the bed is buffeted by objects symbolizing aspects of her life. The opened panel reveals a paintbrush and ladder, symbols of the solace and meaning an artist finds in the studio.

Vevers's works of these years hover between her personal and political concerns, and often address difficult societal issues. In the poignant painting *When We Talk About Rape*, 1992, a mermaid lies stranded on a rock in a barren coastal landscape, violated, her tail sliced open, her red innards and fish bones visible, her arm thrown over her eyes in despair. Even the gold leaf in the sky is cracked, revealing red underneath, as if Nature itself is grieving. The beauty of the painting belies its message of horror and sadness.

In the early 1990s Vevers began the *Flesh Memories* paintings while on a residency at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts and continued them during a fellowship at Provincetown's Fine Arts Work Center, where she finally had space to work on a larger scale. In this new body of work Vevers used the naked torso as an emotional landscape, a visual manifestation of "feeling something in the gut."⁷ She describes these torso paintings as: "Vital organs, visceral feelings, the beating of the heart. Without the expressiveness of the face and the gesture of the limbs, only the torso is left—a solid yet permeable form. The figure is pushed until skin and picture plane become one. Traces of experience are mapped across the body—desire, fear, sorrow and joy made flesh. The mind is the great interpreter, but the torso is where we live."⁸

Painted around the time when Vevers met the artist Daniel Ranalli, who later became her husband, the *Flesh Memories* series focuses on issues of sexuality, fertility, and female/male relationships. Describing the series, she speaks again of her "... desire as a woman artist to paint the female figure from the inside out as a way of countering the male gaze that typifies so much of art history and contemporary culture."⁹ Building up the surfaces of these paintings with modeling paste, gesso, and many layers of color,



EDEN (EVE AND ADAM VI.07A), 2007, OIL AND GOLD LEAF ON IVORINE, 9.375 BY 10 INCHES

Vevers's technique recalls that of fresco, a process of painting on plaster in which the pigments are absorbed into the wall's surface.¹⁰ In *The Offering*, 1994, images of trees, plants, scars, and supplicating hands are embedded in a woman's body, and a bowl of red liquid placed at her womb references both blood and wine, symbols of life and passion. In *Making Pink*, 1996, the mixing of blood and milk or other bodily fluids symbolizes the physical joining of female and male. These paintings are paeans to carnal desires.

After the larger scale of the *Flesh Memories* series, Vevers sought to return to smaller and more detailed work. For a time she worked with the intricate and demanding technique of scrimshaw, a craft developed by whalers in the early 1800s of carving designs into whalebone or ivory. The technique involves using a sharp knife to inscribe an image into the surface of the chosen material, and then rubbing the resulting lines with ink to make them visible. Vevers realized that bone would be the perfect material for an artwork inspired by the story of Dolly, the first cloned sheep. Equating the creation of Eve from Adam's rib with an "early conceptualization of cloning," she produced *The Creation of Eves*, 1998, by inscribing "... twelve bones with the image of Eve quoted from a single Lucas Cranach painting—one bone for each of Adam's ribs."¹¹ Later, when moved by the story of Karla Faye Tucker, a pickaxe murderer then on death row in Texas, she used knife-shaped bones for a series about women murderers. *Women & Knives* brings to the fore women "... who've used blades in acts that range from senseless violence

to heroism."¹² For the twenty knives in the series, Vevers depicted women from history, mythology, and popular culture, including, among others, Lucretia, Lizzie Borden, Xena, Karla Faye Tucker, and the biblical figure of Judith. It was important for Vevers to link the material used with the method of creation and content of these pieces. As she says, "By scrimshawing portraits of murderers on bone, conceptually I could unite the weapon of the murderer with the bone of the victim. Literally cutting into the bone to do scrimshaw adds another layer of resonance."¹³ This resonance is continued in the presentation of the knives in cushioned wooden boxes that suggest weapon cases or coffins.

As the scrimshaw series was coming to completion, Vevers began to work on a new group of paintings that visually transport both artist and viewer to another dimension. Vevers had been collecting people's flying dreams for some time before she decided to celebrate them in paintings that are wondrous, magical, and often humorous. She chose for this series the format of the ex-voto, Mexican devotional paintings commissioned by believers to give thanks to a heavenly power for help received. Vevers realized that this format was perfect for acknowledging "... the almost universal gratitude expressed in the retelling of the dreams ... giving thanks for the miracle of flight."¹⁴ Painted on metal with the dreamer's words written below in Vevers's handwriting, the *Flying Dreams* paintings are the most uplifting in Vevers's oeuvre. Babies suspended by parachutes over a sandy beach learn how to fly (below), a man enters



FLYING DREAM (THE BAKERY), 2002, OIL AND SILVER LEAF ON GALVANIZED STEEL, 5 BY 12 INCHES, COLLECTION OF JZANNE ROGER

a Buddhist monastery and levitates above the monks as they look up in surprise, two young women somersault through the air as they fly over a body of water, a woman wearing red underwear flies into a bakery and hovers over the pastries to the great surprise of the pastry chef. Vevers has taken a religious format—the ex-voto—and used it to celebrate the secular pursuit of personal freedoms and the miraculous occurrences in dreams.

As Vevers continued the *Flying Dreams* paintings, she discovered another art historical source that became the subject of a new body of work. The tradition of eye portraiture first appeared in England during the late eighteenth century, purport-

edly when the Prince of Wales (later to become George IV) sent his lover a miniature portrait of his eye as a secret memento. The practice of keeping the identity of a lover secret through the exchange of eye paintings became popular in England, Russia, and France and continued into the early nineteenth century.¹⁵

The paintings were often worn as brooches, rings, or in locket, tucked away under clothing. Charmed by this convention and already adept at painting on an infinitesimal scale, Vevers initiated a series of *Lover's Eyes*, on ivory, often presenting them in locket-like frames against black velvet. Choosing eyes of women from paintings through-

of us left behind to mourn them.

In 2004, while still painting *Lover's Eyes*, Vevers began a series of shell paintings, returning to a practice from childhood of collecting and painting on seashells. She realized she could merge the content of the image with the material it was painted on. As she explains: "I have often chosen to paint on unusual materials if they resonate with the ideas I'm working on, but with the *Shell Series* it was the other way around—the imagery grew out of the medium itself. Walking the beach to collect the shells, and then cupping them in my hands as I sanded and prepared the surfaces, brought to mind images of sand and sea and a feeling of connection with the creatures of the deep. . . . Seashells, like eggshells, are at once precious—the housing of a life form—and nature's discards, and I enjoy that dichotomy. The natural contour of the shell, coupled with the gold leaf, creates a shrine within which I am able to nestle the image."¹⁷ Within these shells, nubile figures wrestle with lobsters and squid in encounters both sexual and violent, and solitary females with long animal tails ponder their own inner demons. The shells provide perfect cave-like shelters for these intimate scenes of rapture, abandon, and despair. Although Vevers did not know of these precedents before beginning the *Shell Series*, she later discovered two traditions in Japanese art, twelfth-century painted shells called *Kai-awase*, and eighteenth-century erotic woodblock prints called *shunga*.

Many of Vevers's narrative paintings read like cautionary tales, stories from folklore told to warn of impending dangers. This is particularly true of the artist's most recent and ongoing series, *Eden*, begun in 2006. The settings of these small paintings are actually post-Edenic, for they represent a world gone awry, where a mutant race of hybrid creatures endures despite foreboding surroundings. Describing the series and the genesis for the painting *Amoebayouba*, 2007, Vevers writes, "It began with a small doodle of Adam and Eve as a single-celled amoeba in a postapocalyptic Garden of Eden. The impetus came from the confrontation over teaching Creationism alongside the Theory of Evolution in schools. The amorphous creature that I drew was at once male and female: quite literally, flesh made one."¹⁸ Adam and Eve

"The Crew of the Philomena Manta" by Charles W. Hawthorne



One of five paintings on loan from the Town of Provincetown Art Collection



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are joined at the hip, and share multiple legs, sexual organs, and breasts. They stand in ripples of water, in a landscape seductive but ominous; a dark cloud mars the gold leaf of the background, like acid rain polluting the environment. In another painting from the series, *Remorse*, 2007, Vevers evokes the posture of the male figure from Masaccio's *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden* (1424–1428) to portray an anguished, modern-day Adam, "... expelled from a city in flames with his 'tail' between his legs."¹⁹ These exquisite paintings on ivory, a form of synthetic ivory, recall in spirit the paintings of the Netherlandish artist Hieronymus Bosch, whose *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (1503–1504) used fantastic imagery to illustrate moral and religious concepts. At once alluring and repellent, Vevers's new world warns of what could happen if we do not heed a variety of dangers, among them genetically engineered food and global warming. Despite the dire implications of these paintings, Vevers leaves room for optimism. Perhaps the fertile, many-breasted mother figures in *Mammæ*, 2007, and *Marsupedonna*, 2008, are society's best hope for the future. It is most fitting that in Tabitha Vevers's world, it is the women, rescued by the artist from the indignities of history, who may ultimately be our saviors.

RACHEL ROSENFELD LAFO curated the exhibition "*Tabitha Vevers: Narrative Bodies*" for the DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park in Lincoln, Massachusetts, where she was Director of Curatorial Affairs for many years. She has also held positions at the Portland Art Museum, Oregon, and the Center for Conservation and Technical Studies at the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University, and has taught courses in museum administration and curatorship at Tufts University and Boston University. Lafo is currently an independent curator, writer, and art consultant.

Citations:

- 1 From a taped interview with the author at the artist's studio in Wellfleet, Massachusetts, on August 11 and 12, 2008.
- 2 From an e-mail sent to the author on October 4, 2008.
- 3 Quoted in Andre Van Der Wende, "Paintings Draw Vevers's Playfulness Out of Its Shell," *Cape Cod Times*, 7/30/04 – 8/05/04.
- 4 Interview, op. cit.
- 5 From an unpublished artist's statement, 2001.
- 6 From an unpublished personal letter written by the artist on September 28, 2006.
- 7 Interview, op. cit.
- 8 Announcement card, "Tabitha Vevers: Torsos," Kraushaar Galleries, New York, 1997.
- 9 From an unpublished artist's statement, 2001.
- 10 Vevers studied fresco technique at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 1978.
- 11 From an unpublished artist's statement, 1997.
- 12 From an unpublished artist's statement, 1998.
- 13 From an e-mail sent to the author on October 16, 2008.
- 14 From an unpublished artist's statement, 2002.
- 15 See Hanneke Grootenboer, "Treasuring the gaze: eye miniature portraits and the intimacy of vision," *Art Bulletin*, September 2006.
- 16 From an unpublished artist's statement, 2000.
- 17 From an unpublished artist's statement, 2004.
- 18 From an unpublished artist's statement, 2007.
- 19 Ibid.



COLIN DE LAND AND PAT HEARN IN PROVINCETOWN, 1990

COLIN DE LAND PHOTOGRAPHS, MOTION-PICTURE FILM, VIDEOS, AND MISCELLANY, 1984–2004, ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART

Provincetown Artists AND THE ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART

By Charles Duncan

THE ARCHIVES AND PROVINCETOWN'S ARTISTIC HERITAGE

THE ARCHIVES OF American Art, a unit of the Smithsonian Institution, is the world's largest and most widely used resource on the history of art in America. With research collections spanning more than two hundred years and weighted toward unique or "primary source" materials, it is unparalleled in scope and depth as a research institution for the study of the visual arts in the United States.

Today scholars access the Archives' extensive collections for a wide range of purposes including academic and biographical research, information on particular works of art, and organizational chronologies. While the mission of the Archives is to preserve and provide access to research collections, this role is complemented by a program of exhibitions, symposia, and lectures; book and journal publishing; and fellowships for the advancement of scholarship on the visual arts. Continuing activities include acquiring materials that strengthen research holdings as well as conducting oral history interviews with notable subjects in the arts.

Prominent collections at the Archives of American Art include papers from artists who shaped Provincetown's artistic heritage. The Charles Webster and Marion Campbell Hawthorne papers, for

instance, are key for understanding the emergence of Provincetown as an art colony, while the Hans Hofmann papers are revered by those interested in Provincetown's entry into the Modernist sphere. Multifaceted collections, they document not only the long and complex careers of the individual artists, but the respective institutions founded by them—the Cape Cod School of Art and the Hans Hofmann School of Fine Art in Provincetown.

Collections of papers and oral history interviews with subjects such as Houghton Cranford Smith, Paul Resika, E. Ambrose Webster, the Fine Arts Work Center, and Blanche Lazzell are prized resources, yet the strength of the Archives lies in its ability to provide broad context and diverse points of entry for a wide range of research topics. The Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner papers, for instance, offer a glimpse into Krasner's experiences as a student under Hofmann; the Lazzell papers simultaneously shed light on the development of the white-line woodblock print and preserve images of the artist's now-demolished home and studio. Even small holdings, such as a recording of a Pop Art symposium held at the Provincetown Art Association in 1963, can be of immeasurable importance to scholarship.

For the past fifty years the Archives of American Art has offered access to original papers, sound recordings, and microfilm records of legacy collections through its research centers. Today, electronic access offers a new gateway to such resources. A leader among its institutional peers, the Archives presently makes available



BLANCHE LAZZELL ON THE PORCH OF HER PROVINCETOWN STUDIO, 1942, BLANCHE LAZZELL PAPERS, 1890–1982, ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART

sixty-eight digitized collections of papers containing a total of more than 640,000 scanned documents via its Web-based collections online. Thus, researchers interested in viewing design plans and construction photographs relating to the Edgar Stillman house in Wellfleet now need only to access the Marcel Breuer papers on the Archives' Web site (www.aaa.si.edu) to benefit from the material.

Looking ahead, the Archives of American Art continues to train a broad eye on the greater picture of visual culture, welcoming recent Provincetown-related collections as diverse as early-twentieth-century glass-plate negatives to the papers of Jack Tworkov (the subject of a forthcoming exhibition at the Archives) to the photographic archive of Colin de Land, the late alternative downtown New York art dealer who summered on the Cape with his wife, Pat Hearn.¹ To be a successful resource for the future requires being in dialogue not only with the past, but with the evolving genealogy of creativity, for the story of art is best told when the historical and contemporary can both be taken into account.

PROVINCETOWN'S LONG POINT GALLERY

IN 2008 AND 2009 the Archives of American Art received by donation the papers of three founding members of Provincetown's Long Point Gallery: Tony Vevers, Fritz Bultman, and Sidney Simon. An artist-run collective, Long Point operated from 1977 to 1998 on the upper story of the American Legion building at Howland and Commercial Streets.² Open during the summer, the gallery offered group shows alongside pairs of solo exhibitions, serving as a venue where mature artists were welcomed to experiment and focus on new work. As Mary Abell, one of the gallery's former directors, noted in the 1991 issue of this magazine, "Our artists' gallery is idealistic, egalitarian, non-commercial and largely apolitical."

Materials within the Vevers, Bultman, and Simon collections range from handwritten letters to photographs to digital recordings, underscoring the diverse range of media found within contemporary collections of "papers." The issue of media is no small matter, for Marshall McLuhan

posited that human consciousness evolved alongside our means of communication, developing from oral forms to written and printed documents to electronic modes that now link together our "Global Village." Today, as selections from the papers of Long Point Gallery artists show, the task of assembling history's documents must embrace new vehicles for preserving information since a broad range of media types now informs archives of visual artists.

Storytelling and the idea of memory were central to Tony Vevers (1926–2008), whose artistic output often embraced myth and

the collective past in association with his own personal history. A vital member of Provincetown's artistic community for more than forty years, Vevers was an early participant in the Archives of American Art's oral history program of interviews with prominent figures in the arts. During a recorded conversation with Dorothy Seckler in 1965, just three years after he and his wife, the artist Elspeth Halvorsen, purchased their home on Bradford Street from Mark Rothko, Vevers offered a lively retelling of how emigrating from England affected his artistic temperament:

Tony Vevers: I'd be interested one day to make a study of how many painters came here from Europe. You know, you think of Jan Müller, Jack Tworkov, Rothko, Hofmann, you know, I think at least fifty percent of the painters in this country are immigrants. And I think some of this has a lot to do with the impact of coming here from Europe. There's something stimulating; there's something unique very definitely.

Dorothy Seckler: I'm sort of surprised it wasn't a bit frightening, however, such a violent country, so unfinished, you know. In England all the little edges of lawns are all sort of tidied up with hedges and so on. . . . And here everything is sprawling. Lots of waste.

Tony Vevers: I liked that very much when I first came here.

The Vevers interview also serves as a unique source for practical information on the history of Provincetown's art scene:

Tony Vevers: I'd like to put on the record that Yvonne Anderson, who ran the Sun Gallery, was instrumental—had the most important

THE ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART was founded in Detroit in 1954 by Edgar P. Richardson, then Director of the Detroit Institute of Arts, and Lawrence A. Fleischman, a Detroit businessman. In 1970 the Archives joined the Smithsonian Institution, and today it manages more than seventeen million items within five thousand collections and has conducted more than three thousand oral history interviews with key figures in the development of art in America. It maintains Research Centers in Washington, D.C., and New York, New York, with additional access to microfilm at affiliated research centers and through interlibrary loan.

gallery up here certainly I think from 1955 to 1960—she showed here Jan Müller, Bob Beauchamp, Lester Johnson, and many of the younger painters long before anybody else did. And, you know, it's a very exciting gallery. She's kind of the Betty Parsons of Provincetown. And she was very good.

And finally, it is through Vevers's own voice that we can best appreciate his greater view of the creative impulse.

Tony Vevers: Art is part of your life, you know, it's not just something you do; that your painting is not an exercise; it's not the sort of thing you go down and produce. It's something that comes out of your own personal involvement with life.

Like Vevers, Fritz Bultman (1919–1985) was deeply enmeshed in both the conversations of mid-century Modernism and the activities of Provincetown's art community. A student of Hans Hofmann, Bultman moved to Provincetown in 1945. He returned to New York during the next decade but maintained a strong presence on the Cape through artist-run enterprises such as the Long Point Gallery and the Fine Arts Work Center, which he cofounded in 1968. Currently the Archives is collecting the Fritz Bultman papers, which are rich in correspondence with contemporaries like David Smith and Jack Tworok, as well as drafts of the artist's writings.

Essays on art may explore the whimsical or the sublime; be used to advance ideologies; offer observations. A six-page typed manuscript with annotations titled *Nature, Naturalism and the Dream*, now in the Bultman papers, draws upon literature from the Ancients to the twentieth century to tackle the age-old dichotomy of nature and art, considered against the Modernist lens of Surrealism and abstraction. Written in 1962—the year Bultman began to concentrate on collages—the essay posits:

Every artist who situates himself in relationship to the world inevitably faces the problem of creating metaphor [*sic*], of translating this sensuous world of experience, of carrying over from Things something of their essence into art; of making manifest our intuitions. . . . But from the very beginning, a few painters, poets, and poet-architects sensed the two inter-balanced concepts of nature and art as organic and visionary.

Offering metaphor of his own, Bultman goes on to advocate for the universal, which he believes can be discovered within twentieth-century art, but questions movements that claim domain over such a concept:

The surrealist's doctrine of making night into day in view of the eternal night of outer space, is as local and limited as putting numbers on floors so that one will know where one is, in case of fire. For beyond all other dreams there is the Faustian dream, the vision of the ultimate, the ultimate self, the ultimate nature,

call it what you may. It is here that modern art again touches hands with the primitive.

Nature, Naturalism and the Dream reminds us that texts afford artists a critical distance from which to consider the visual enterprise; a means of assessing convictions while offering students, colleagues, and the public access to ideas that inform their work. Certainly collections like the Fritz Bultman papers are valuable for this role alone.

The contributions of Sidney Simon (1917–1997) undoubtedly stand shoulder-to-shoulder with his Long Point peers. Enjoying a formidable career that included cofounding the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, active leadership in the army's War Art Department, and major public art commissions, Simon is probably best known to Provincetown audiences for his sculpture, a subject he taught at New York's Art Students League and celebrated during his 1995 forty-year retrospective at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum.

The Sidney Simon papers offer a wide range of documents that chronicle the artist's life and work, including several VHS-format videotapes critical to a full appreciation of his output. Video as a consumer medium only became accessible in the mid-1960s, and while the notion of recording moving images via a handheld device may seem commonplace today, video recordings appear only within collections of the most recent generation of artists. For Simon, who had a keen interest in moving sculpture, the medium allows a time-based record by which to consider his work, as well as the opportunity for the artist actively to present examples.

A unique VHS title within the Sidney Simon papers records the artist during a walk-through of his 1995 retrospective in Provincetown. Clearly an amateur production, the video allows Simon to

offer a narrative overview of his exhibition, stopping to dwell on certain pieces of figurative sculpture and set into play mobile works, such as suspended cast-bronze *Acrobats*. The videographer is careful to capture individual sculptures through multiple angles and zooms while preserving an overall sense of the gallery design. Simon's narration is enthusiastic but matter-of-fact, offering biographical associations behind some of the works while his physical presence enables the viewer more accurately to gauge their scale. One of several video titles in the collection, the production underscores advantages that “new media” can bring to an artist's papers.

While it has been more than ten years since the Long Point Gallery closed its doors, the Vevers, Bultman, and Simon papers at the Archives of American Art help to preserve the association between three of its founding members. Individually, the collections are formidable resources on the lives and careers of the artists; collectively, they strengthen the Smithsonian's already-substantial resources on postwar art-making in Provincetown. While message may still outweigh medium for most scholarship, it is wise to keep one eye on the means by which history is conveyed.

1 *The Tworok Papers* at the Archives of American Art New York Research Center will run concurrently with *Jack Tworok Against Extremes: Five Decades of Painting* at the UBS Art Gallery, both located at 1285 Avenue of the Americas, New York, New York, from August 20 to November 13, 2009.

2 The exact location was 492 Commercial Street. Founding members included Varujan Boghosian, Fritz Bultman, Carmen Cicero, Sideo Frombolotti, Edward Giobbi, Budd Hopkins, Rick Klauber, Leo Manso, Robert Motherwell, Paul Resika, Judith Rothschild, Sidney Simon, Nora Speyer, and Tony Vevers. The Long Point Gallery records are housed at the Archives of American Art thanks to the efforts of Rosalind Pace, its last director.

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IMAGE FROM VIDEO *SIDNEY SIMON RETROSPECTIVE*, 1995, PROVINCETOWN ART ASSOCIATION AND MUSEUM, SIDNEY SIMON PAPERS, 1917–2000, ARCHIVES OF AMERICAN ART

Sky Power

BEYOND THE HORIZON

By Susan Rand Brown



PASSAGE, 2006, OIL ON CANVAS, 57 BY 76 INCHES

BECKONING LIKE ripe summer peaches, Sky Power's seductive, luminous canvases—"dreamscapes," she calls them—are of the moment. Absent obvious narrative, Power's recent works—*Secluded* (2005) in the permanent collection of the Provincetown Art Association and Museum or *Sea Roses* (2008), where violet surrenders to the pull of orangey pink, and needle-size red zips pierce a winding ribbon of pale yellow—reach to the idea of a painting as metaphor. "The subject of art is aesthetic perception," a Zen-like pronouncement attributed to West Coast Expressionist Robert Irwin, perfectly captures the surrender Power's work invites.

Looking at Power's work over the last half-decade, we are aware that here is someone at the top of her game. Confident yet always questing, she has consistently simplified her means of working the canvas until what leaves her studio is immediately identifiable as her own: we respond to the purity of the visual language, the absence of gimmickry and easy resolution.

Hers is a deep connection to the lyricism of abstraction, a fellowship extending across time and space. We see in her work a conversation with twentieth-century artists. There's Matisse, of course; and those closely associated with Provincetown, who likewise made aesthetic perception a primary concern: early twentieth-century modernist E. Ambrose Webster ("for his

colors"), who lived and taught in Provincetown; Mark Rothko, Hans Hofmann, Robert Motherwell ("for his mark-making"), Helen Frankenthaler, James Lechay, and Selina Trief. Asked about major influences, she cites the Fauves for bold tonal juxtapositions—orange, violet, cerulean—that in her hands mark the sensations of a spacious interior world.

Reared first on the Texas plains, and then in Wyoming "watching tornadoes come across," Power jokingly admits to being preternaturally sensitive to weather; in this way, her work also echoes the roiling, atmospheric cloudscapes and skyscapes of eighteenth-century English painter J. M. W. Turner—for their fascination with what lies beyond the horizon line, but, more so, as a record of the search for an understated, elemental language, an eloquence pared to essentials.

Would anyone who named herself "Sky" when she was twenty, to signal a coming-of-age into the promise of the 1970s, not be attuned to weather? Her most recent works, the large paintings that can be read as guides to universal truths rooted in particular emotions, are "very free, like the weather." In a musical voice tracing the many places she has lived, she adds, "All my work makes you think of the weather," plucking the thought from a bright afternoon light. "And while you think of the physical weather out there, there's also the emotional weather in here." She places her hand to her chest.

"The connection always, for me, is the link between the inner and the outer."

During the summer, the fifty-eight-year-old Power spends much of her time in the Berta Walker Gallery, on Bradford Street in the East End of town, where she shows her work and serves as gallery manager. Her home and studio are nestled in the woods of North Truro. A few years ago, as a reminder of her Native American heritage (she is one-sixteenth Cherokee), she built a fire pit, sheltered by rustic birdhouses and a thatch of ten-foot stalks whose yellow daisy-like blooms swayed in the breeze. Although such a comparison would embarrass the modest Power, this outdoor shrine, paradoxically rugged and domestic, suggests the two sides of Power's self-sufficient ingenuity: there is her ease in nature with its potential for wildness; there is her pleasure in a sheltering place, close to sea and dunes.

Power was born in Post, Texas, a small town in Garza County, founded by her great-grandfather, who arrived there by covered wagon. One grandfather was a sheriff; the other, a county judge. Her mother, who lived in Provincetown at the end of her life, was a musician and a painter. Power and her sisters had private art lessons: there was that first experience doing a portrait which, like tea leaves floating in the bottom of a cup, told her fortune. "The high school teacher thought I copied it from a book, so I know I must have had something in me," Power says, savoring the irony. She went to Casper College in Wyoming (a visual reference for her big skies), and found her way to Ed Gothberg, who had known Willem de Kooning in Manhattan, and "excelled in figure drawing." For years after, Power did figurative portraits, of herself, and her lovers.

By her late teens, she was in Seattle, going to art school; she transferred to the Massachusetts College of Art after a year, where her tenure was equally brief. "All I could see was I would be teaching art, which I did not want to do." She remained in Boston, living with a partner, painting, exploring the woman she would become. Stonewall happened, a defining moment: for Power, it meant meeting other young, gay women, and forming a commune she refers to as Feather's Farm, on a hundred-acre plot in Kingston, Massachusetts (near Plymouth). Using salvaged wood and old nails, Power built her own house; she dug and dried rock to construct a fireplace. The women started an organic cranberry business, hand-raking and sorting. They trucked the berries to Cambridge food co-ops. It was still the early 1970s.

By mid-decade Sky Power was in Provincetown, part of a charismatic circle including musician and business owner Laurel Brooke (a founder of Gabriel's Guest House), and Molly Benjamin, who would become well-known as a fisherman and newspaper columnist. Power and Brooke established the first horse-and-buggy business in the center of town: she tells humorous anecdotes about doing carpentry at Taves Boat Yard to retrofit her pickup with an oak rack, then driving to Pennsylvania for a horse trained to pull a surrey (there was much controversy in town about mingling horses with auto traffic



SEA ROSES, 2008, OIL ON CANVAS, 24 BY 30 INCHES, COURTESY PROVINCETOWN ART ASSOCIATION AND MUSEUM

after one hapless hoofed creature, spooked by a car, took off down Bradford midsummer). Before long Power had returned to Texas, intending to earn money to care for the horse; her first Provincetown sojourn had ended.

Back in Provincetown four years later, Power found work at Napi's Restaurant doing kitchen cleanup. Consistently hardworking, a quick study, Power's energy impressed owners Napi and Helen Van Dereck, who shortly thereafter invited her to learn to cook. Thus it was that in the early 1980s, Power trained in the high-pressure art of restaurant food preparation, under the tutelage of watercolorist Julia Kelly, daughter of painter Nancy Whorf, and granddaughter of watercolorist John Whorf.

At Napi's she rose to head cook. When the Van Derecks took over the Flagship Restaurant in the mid-1980s, Power became sous chef ("I took to the adrenalin and creativity of the kitchen"), a position she held until 1996. Like any Provincetown narrative, this one is filled with serendipity; by the time Power met Berta Walker, both Whorf and Kelly, mother and daughter, were represented by the Walker Gallery.

During that last sojourn in Texas, Power, eager to learn, apprenticed as a piano-tuner. She already knew carpentry, and, as to ear training, played the guitar: telling this story, Power's innate modesty makes it seem so natural, so easy. For a decade, she cooked in the evening, and tuned pianos during the day: Power's small notice in local papers for her Cape-wide piano-tuning business was how many knew and identified her.

All this time—at the commune, in Provincetown, and back in Texas, the years when she was a piano-tuning chef, or in San Francisco when for a brief period she was a gourmet live-in chef at the Djerassi Foundation, meeting artists and writers

including novelist Richard McCann, a member of the Fine Arts Work Center faculty and still a friend (they traveled together in Ireland)—Power was painting, and showing work.

In the mid-1980s she had a show at the Eye of Horus Gallery, on the top floor of Napi's Restaurant; there were solo shows at the Provincetown Group Gallery when it was adjacent to the Flagship; when it became the Boathouse Gallery, Power remained a gallery artist. There were also solo shows at the Foundry Gallery at DuPont Circle, Washington, D.C., and the Infinity Gallery in Union Square, Boston. When Michael McGuire took over the Boathouse

space for his own gallery, Power showed in other galleries in town. In 2004, she started showing at the Berta Walker Gallery.

Talk to Power, and she tells you the years since have brought an accelerated rush of creativity, gallery shows, even a musical portrait.

This year especially has been a bonanza of creativity. She found herself painting feverishly after a fall 2008 cruise to port cities in France, Italy, Spain, Greece, and Turkey. Paintings influenced by the experience include *Clear Water* (2009) and *Restless Sea* (2009): gestural swirls of mauve, purple, and orange radiate urgency and energy. "I am driven by newness; I need to take my work to places that are new," she says of these pieces, whose brushwork appears looser, more distinct than what came before.

There Is a Field—Rumi (2008), in oranges, greens, and golden pinks, suggests sitting on a cloud; a perfect silence is broken by soft showers, denoted by drips marking the canvas in downward splashes. This painting was exhibited early in 2009 as part of the group show "ROYGBIV" at the Cotuit Center for the Arts on Cape Cod (initials stand for red/orange/yellow/green/blue/indigo/violet), curated by Maggie Van Sciver, president of the Arts Foundation of Cape Cod.

Energy bequeaths the same: she accepted an invitation to participate with five paintings in "L.I.F.E. in the Abstract," a group show in February 2009 at the Cahoon Museum in Cotuit. How did gallery director Robert Gambone find her? "He saw a few paintings and just loved my work," she says melodically, the sounds of "loved my work" hitting the ear as if freshly unwrapped from shiny foil. Power's *Sea Roses* (2008), an aria to spring's first breath, is featured on the museum's announcement card; she was invited to present an artist's talk. Gallery owners in Naples, Florida, have expressed interest in her work. *New Paintings: Spiritual Preference*, a selection of Power's recent work, will show at the Berta Walker Gallery in Provincetown, July 10–26, 2009.



CLEAR WATER, 2009, OIL ON MASONITE, 24 BY 36 INCHES



SKY POWER AT HER FIRE PIT

The majestic *Interior of a Landscape* (2007) was included in the Cahoon exhibit. "This painting is usually described as about the sea, the sky, the land," Power says with a knowing smile. "But the part of me that it meant most to is the organic part, the effect nature has had in my life." A loose cloud of cottony-pink on the upper edge of the canvas seems to float by a plane of ruddy salmons and oranges; a green primal soup cradles an orangey focal point that Power connects to the clay colors and rocky landscape of the Caprock region in Texas where she grew up. Feathery yarn-like drips tumble over what looks like raw canvas but is a layer of white gesso, a technique (whose effect reminds this writer of canvas patches in color-field paintings) Power uses to balance her compact areas of intensely toned colors with this visual equivalent of a musical breath-mark.

Power mixes a vat of color so she can work on several pieces at once, letting each layer of thinned paint dry before brushing on the next. Because the resulting layers can appear flat, more Rothko stain than juicy textural stroke of an Expressionist, Power's medium is often mistaken for acrylic.

"I start off very free," she explains about the intuitive part of the process, "and once I have that, I

become analytical about what colors I want, what effect." In addition to large brushes, she paints with rags. "You end up with that gorgeous soft residue." A work in progress can be positioned on a wall, an easel, or even the floor. To make the drips, or markings, she is likely to move the canvas around, encouraging the loose medium to travel. "I want a painting that you can get close to, and it is strong, and when you

move back thirty feet, it is still strong," she says. "Whatever I need to do, I will do it."

A recent series of paintings on the Bardo reflects her reading of Tibetan Buddhism. The concept of Bardo is one of constant transition between states of awareness. *Staying in the Middle* (2007) expresses extreme states, or opposing unresolved feelings, through an image of suspension or separation. Layers of orangey yellow radiate over the top third of the canvas; there is a suggestion of a meandering bridge, a separation—we see an opening in the canvas, primed yet colorless—which reads as either invitation or barrier to what comes next. Orange mark-making connects through the opening to layers of violet purple; at any time we can be swept into a zone still unknown.

In her unaffected way, Power describes the process of creating these emotion-driven pieces: "I connect to what I feel inside, and what might come: it's about me, but more than me, something bigger that I am a part of. I feel that my work bridges the gap between me and what is on the other side, the other world."

The mark-making or iconography in her new work, those splashes, drips, feathery traces, and needle-like zips, connects Power's recent work to

her Ikage paintings from 1999 to 2001, where rune-like signs suggest an ancient alphabet. Ikage, she explains while showing a sampling in her studio, is the Apache word for shield or protector. Native American men created these shields as their power symbols; Power completed a series of Ikage paintings (over fifty in a three-year period) to represent her own identity, as a woman, part Cherokee, from the Southwest.

She tells a story about showing the Ikage series to a Native American "old-timer" who knew her family: he immediately connected the stick-like calligraphy of the marks dancing over the surface of these paintings to sign-making on Native artifacts, a symbolism she was not aiming for intentionally. The Ikage pieces are oils on Masonite; since wood is a hard medium, Power was able to hand-sand and reapply sections of dried paint, tweaking color and texture into collage.

The lyrical *Passage* (2006) also involved reclaiming an image. She took a charcoal sketch of a woman's torso she had set aside, and reimagined it as the basis for a landscape whose colors suggest the Southwest: a billowing blue-bird sky descends to a clay ridge; clay and peachy tones inscribe a line where shoulders might go. Feathered drips form a lacy, clay-toned veil draping one breast. Blue and peach tones play hide-and-seek, mirroring each other as opposites: the overall effect is sensuous and playful, a womanist space merging figure with land and sky.

Power's work leads to unexpected effects. Composer and pianist Robert DeGaetano, a New York City native and graduate of the Julliard School, known for musical portraits (in the mid-1980s, Alice Tully commissioned him to compose *The Challenger* to commemorate the seven astronauts killed in the explosion of the space shuttle) was very taken by Power's art. They met in Provincetown in the late 1990s; she was his piano-tuner. DeGaetano would go to the Walker Gallery to look at her art. He suggested composing her musical portrait, in exchange for a painting.

In the summer of 2005, DeGaetano premiered the musical portrait in front of its subject: Power and Berta Walker formed a rapt audience of two in the Unitarian Universalist Meeting House while he performed the introspective, lushly romantic sonata for solo piano before the artist who inspired it. "He understood me exactly," Power said of the experience of listening to music whose intention was to describe her essence in sound. "I was a little nervous before hearing it. I didn't know if I would love it. It is a deep, moving, calm piece: he tapped into my spirit," said this visionary artist for whom tapping into the spirit is the highest of compliments.

SUSAN RAND BROWN profiled the painter Lillian Orlovsky for the 2004/05 issue of Provincetown Arts, and has since interviewed artists Ellen LeBow, Barbara E. Cohen, and Mike Wright. A native New Yorker teaching literature in Connecticut, Brown began writing about the arts in the 1970s, and is an arts correspondent for the Provincetown Banner. She has spent summers in her family's Commercial Street home for over four decades.



REFLEXES, 2009, OIL ON CANVAS, 24 BY 36 INCHES

Ann Peretz

A WOMAN OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

By Paul Brodeur

ANNE PERETZ knew she wanted to be an artist from the moment she set foot in Paris as a twelve-year-old, when her father, Henry Labouisse, was directing the Marshall Plan in France.

"I was unbelievably excited by the prospect of living there," she says. "The idea of becoming an artist in Paris captured my heart and soul. Right away I started taking my easel out to paint the bridges along the Seine." Within a short time, Peretz was attending Saturday classes at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière, a well-known art school in the Fifth Arrondissement, and when she was fourteen she studied with André Lhote, the noted painter and theoretician, who influenced a generation of French and expatriate artists. Since then, her dream of becoming an artist has become a reality, and in July of this year and in the summer of 2010 some of the work she has executed during the past dozen years will be exhibited at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum.

Peretz is first and foremost a painter of landscape. Some of it has been inspired by her travel to far-flung places—Morocco, Spain, Provence, Tuscany, Greece, Vietnam, Mexico, New Zealand, and Israel—but the preponderance of her oeuvre has been inspired by the sand dunes, freshwater ponds, and salt marshes of Outer Cape Cod, where she has spent much of her time for more than forty years. Her dune pictures—some as large as six by ten feet—dwarf the diminutive Peretz, a dark-haired, small-boned woman with a flashing smile, who looks ten years younger than her age. Peretz considers sand dunes as standing for the power and violence of nature. "Look closely at a dune and you'll see that it is in motion," she says. "Rivulets of sand, tufts of grass, and beach plum bushes are constantly sifting and tumbling down its side. A dune is always convulsing, retreating, losing ground to wind, rain, and sea. Dunes are about turmoil. They're about layers behind layers and colors behind colors. They're more than just sunny places to sit and look out across the ocean."

Peretz has painted the dunes of Truro on single canvases, in triptych and polyptych form, and in all seasons and weather. For the most part, she employs Expressionist techniques, using layers of ochre, raw umber, and green mixed with sand to provide texture, and applying them with a palette knife to give the finished work a sculptural effect. Sunlight illuminates mountains of sand that tower above an unseen but elemental sea. The observer is forced to acknowledge the vast indifference of nature. Peretz is never sentimental but neither is she pessimistic. One senses somberness and iso-



VIETNAM BOAT, 2008/09, OIL ON CANVAS, 40 BY 60 INCHES

lation in her painting but never desolation because the work is always full of drama. By transforming the harsh reality of landscape into abstraction, she enhances its power and produces an austere result that combines asceticism with athleticism. Although far too young to have been influenced by Lhote during the brief time she studied with him, her work reflects his famous dictum that atmospheric fluidity provides the way from realism to poetry. She arrives at this effect with careful deliberation, but without being overly self-conscious. "Sometimes I just put oil and turpentine on a brush, fling it at the canvas, and hope it lands in the right place," she says, with a laugh. "If it doesn't, I simply wipe it off with a rag and try again. I have a lot of fun that way."

Peretz loves to swim in the ponds of the Wellfleet Woods, so it is not surprising that one of her favorite motifs is a headland at Horseleech Pond, which she has painted many times. Like her dune paintings, she has rendered the pond at various times of day and in different conditions—in the morning, at sunset, and during rain. Above all, the Horseleech series shows how Peretz's work reflects and summons up mood—hers and that of the viewer—as well as the atmosphere that cloaks and is conjured up by the pond. As a result, her pond canvases have much in common with scenes of marshes bordering the Pamet River to which she has given a sculptural effect by spreading overlapping layers of paint with her palette knife.

In recent years, Peretz has become fascinated by old pilings that used to be seen along the harbor front of Provincetown, and has completed a number of paintings of them. "I love the geometry of pilings," she explains. "How they jut out of the sand and mud at different angles, leaning this way and that in clumps and pairs. I find them full of melancholy. They've been abandoned by whatever piers and wharves they once supported, and all the years of bearing weight, being subjected to

the ravages of storms, and undermined by the shifting of the bottom beneath them have taken their toll and changed the way they look." Not surprisingly, Peretz's paintings of the pilings present a bleak and disjointed existence at the edge of the sea, and, like her depictions of the dunes, evidence of the impermanence of all things created by man and nature.

Perhaps Peretz's most powerful and passionate work in recent years has been inspired by trips she has made to Morocco, Spain, Israel, and Vietnam. A large triptych hanging on the wall of a harbor-front law firm in Boston is suffused with pink ochre suggesting the color of the red-clay earth of the Atlas Mountains of Morocco, and presents a novel perspective. The left-hand panel looks up at the pinkish-stone facades of dwellings in a mountain village, the middle panel looks straight at a reddish and rugged landscape, and the right-hand panel looks down upon another village. Looked at as a whole, the flanking panels appear to have emerged from the central panel as if the villages were a detail in the landscape. The effect is to submerge the habitation of man within the panorama of nature.

Several large, square canvases represent a massive and steep-angled quarry in Tamariu, Spain, whose facade is illuminated by strong sunlight suggested by layers of white, brown, and orange ochre. Green bushes growing at the base, together with a fringe of trees at the top and a deep blue sky beyond, give the multiple planes and shapes of the quarry's face a depth and power that force the viewer to acknowledge the sheer dynamic of the rock. While in Tamariu, Peretz also painted a series of large square canvases called *Tamariu Woods*, which Joseph Leo Kerner, Professor of Fine Arts at Harvard University, has described as masterpieces. These pictures (some measure sixty-six by sixty-six inches) depict the massive trunks and upper branches of

trees growing up and sideways from the top of a cliff as they lean toward the Mediterranean Sea. Professor Koerner has written:

Peretz manages to make us feel not simply that we behold trees on the coast of Spain, but that we stand there in our bodies, as well. She heightens this doubling by making her effigies almost life-sized. This invites us not merely to scan the trees with our eyes, but to reach out and touch them.

Equally powerful and even larger are paintings that Peretz executed during a four-month stay in Israel in the late winter and spring of 2000. A landscape entitled *Jerusalem to the East* is infused with a searing light that almost obliterates the white stone dwellings of an Arab village sitting upon a hill in the background. Indeed, the painting is so ablaze with light that viewers might almost be inclined to shield their eyes. Other paintings depict a hardscrabble terrain strewn with boulders, punctuated by olive trees, and striated by terraced hills. Still others reveal the geometric clustering of buildings and rooftops in the Port of Jaffa. All of them are bathed in a harsh light that combines radiance with austerity.

"Before I went to Israel, I asked a painter friend who lives there what I should bring," Peretz remembers. "He said to bring lots and lots of white paint, and when I thought I had enough to pack even more. Boy, was he right! The light there was merciless!"

In 2006, Peretz made a trip to Vietnam with her friend Arien Mack, a Professor of Psychology at the New School, who spends summers in Truro. Upon

her return, she embarked upon a series of paintings of rice paddies, which present a foreboding quality that is unlike most of her other work. "Rice paddies are another form of the harsh landscape that has always intrigued me," she says. "They also present a geometry of squares and rectangles that I find fascinating. I use lots of brown and black when I paint them because I associate them with a very dark and sinister past."

By way of explanation, Peretz described the life she led after joining her father in Paris. Her mother had died when Peretz was six, and, although she loved Paris, she hated the French private school she attended. "I was rebellious," she recalls. "I began playing hooky and spending my days at a local shooting gallery where I collected stuffed rabbits and other animals." When punished for her truancy, Peretz contrived to set her desk on fire and got the boot. At that point, her father decided she should go to school in the States.

The school Peretz was sent to was Miss Porter's in Farmington, Connecticut. She then attended Smith College, where she studied painting with Mervin Jules and drawing and woodcut with Leonard Baskin. Meanwhile, she had met her first husband, Peter Farnsworth, a medical student at McGill University, whom she married at the age of twenty, before graduating from Smith. For a year, she lived in Montreal while her husband was doing his internship. Then, while he was completing a year of residency in New York City, she completed the requirements for her college degree at the New School, where she studied with Anthony Toney and Moses Soyer. Since the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps had paid for Farnsworth's medical education, he was required to spend the next two years serving in the air force. As a result, he and Peretz, who had by now given birth to their son and daughter, were sent to Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines in 1962.

"I had already participated in two marches to protest our growing involvement in Vietnam," Peretz remembers. "When I first arrived at Clark, I bought a subscription for *I. F. Stone's Weekly* for the base library, which never got displayed. I also started writing letters to senators and congressmen. All I got back was 'thanks for your interest,' and blah, blah, blah." At that point Peretz started hanging out at the officer's club swimming pool to find out what the fighter pilots, who were flying missions every day, were up to. At first, she couldn't get much out of them, but then they started to open up, telling her they were strafing targets in North Vietnam and ma-

chine-gunning Vietnamese peasants as they worked in the rice paddies. "That's why my rice-paddy paintings are so dark and harsh," she says.

Shortly after the Tonkin Gulf Resolution was passed by Congress, Peretz wrote a letter to the *Manila Times* voicing fierce opposition to an illegal war that had been based upon what everyone now knows to have been concocted information—that North Vietnamese torpedo boats had attacked an American destroyer in the Gulf of Tonkin. "I never expected to see my letter printed on the front page of the newspaper's Sunday edition, let alone next to a photograph of a huge American soldier with a gun, who was towering over a tiny Vietnamese," she remembers, "but that's what happened."

On the next day, the telephone rang and a colonel asked to speak to Captain Farnsworth. The colonel ordered him to order Peretz not to speak to anyone about her letter. Fifteen minutes later, the telephone rang again, and the colonel asked her husband if her father was, by any chance, a five-star general? When her husband replied in the negative, the colonel asked if her father was an ambassador. As it happened, Peretz's father was President Kennedy's ambassador to Greece, and, as such, was considered to hold a high military rank.

Later that week, word came that the area commander, a four-star air force general, wanted to see Peretz. "I was thrilled," she recalls. "It seemed as if my antiwar efforts might have hit the jackpot. I got all dressed up in my little Hong Kong silk suit, and was picked up by the colonel with a limousine and driver, and brought to the office of the commanding general, who was sitting behind the largest desk I've ever seen before or since. After the colonel and I sat down, the general started by telling me that a year earlier he'd had the honor of attending his son's graduation from the Air Force Academy. He went on to say that he had been particularly moved by a recitation of the pledge of allegiance, which had been part of the ceremony. At that point the colonel handed him a piece of paper, and, reading from it, the general recited the pledge. When he finished, he looked long and hard at me. I looked back at him and remember shrugging as if to say, 'So?'"

Peretz continued her story by saying that the general had then set out upon a new tack, telling her that he'd had the opportunity to witness the excitement and bravery of the young pilots who were engaging the enemy in Vietnam, and to see how proud they were to be representing their country. Peretz replied that she didn't think anyone should be proud of fighting a war that was illegal and of little purpose. She could tell the general was getting agitated because by now his face had become flushed. A moment later, he started down another path, telling her he understood that the base hospital, where her husband worked as a pediatrician, wasn't typical of the normal air force culture.

"He seemed to be suggesting that I might have been unwittingly influenced by dissident opinion there," Peretz remembers. "He floundered about with that notion for a while, until I suddenly realized he was working himself up to ask me a question, and decided to help him out. I inquired



FILINGS #4, 5/6/05/07, OIL ON CANVAS, 44 BY 34 INCHES

whether he wanted to know if I was a member of the Communist Party. Then I told him 'No,' and that was the end of the interview."

Peretz and Farnsworth divorced soon after returning to the States, and two years later, she married Martin Peretz, who ran the social studies program at Harvard University, and later became the owner and editor in chief of the *New Republic*. (He is still the magazine's editor in chief.) "Back in the sixties, Marty and I were involved in lots of political activity," Peretz recalls. "We were supporters of John Lewis's Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, Martin Luther King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and Students for a Democratic Society. In addition, I worked for Senator Eugene McCarthy's presidential campaign in 1968."

The following year, Peretz's life took a different turn. She had come from a family with a long tradition of public service. Her mother and father had met while working in a settlement house designed to help poor immigrant families in Manhattan, and her father's work with the Marshall Plan and two United Nations agencies had influenced her greatly. By the time she was at Miss Porter's School, he had married Eve Curie, Marie Curie's daughter and biographer, and was living in Beirut and working for the UN's Relief and Works Agency. During school vacations, she accompanied him on trips to refugee camps in Gaza, Lebanon, and Jordan. "I remember spending Christmas in Gaza—a wretched place where everyone lived in tents—at a time when UN Peacekeepers were stationed there," she says.

The turn in Peretz's life took her to the Simmons School of Social Work in Boston, which she attended between 1969 and 1972, and from which she received her Master's Degree in Social Work. She then started practicing as a therapist. The more she dealt with clients in low-income housing projects, however, the more she came to realize that counseling them had become too focused on the mother and was not sufficiently sensitive to family members and their surroundings. In 1982, together with a therapist named David Kantor, she founded a nonprofit family therapy and community outreach agency called the Family Center. It was designed to engage poor families by helping all members work together to identify bad habits, as well as their strengths, and by so doing encourage them to resolve destructive family problems, and raise their children in a healthy environment.

The Family Center has been a resounding success during the twenty-seven years it has been in operation. Today, it not only provides help to more than five hundred families each year, but also trains dozens of family workers to use its programs and models in other agencies. In recent years, Peretz has stopped going to the center every day, but as its founder and president she still works with staff to develop programs, such as the Parenting Journey, which helps parents examine their lives, decide what they like and don't like about their own upbringing, and undertake to transform behavior they regard as repeating their own bad experiences. "In one program, we ask parents to bring with them an object that's important to them," she explains.



PROVINCETOWN DUNES, 2008, OIL ON CANVAS, 24 BY 24 INCHES

"In this way, we try to persuade them to tell us their story. Many of these people come to us with feelings of deep shame and failure. We try to counter that right away by accentuating the positive. The philosophy behind the Family Center can be simply stated. It is to empower parents."

Peretz and her second husband recently divorced after thirty years of marriage. These days, she takes the summer off from the Family Center to concentrate on her painting and tend to her duties as a grandmother—she has four grown children and seven grandchildren, all of whom take turns visiting her at her home in Truro so that she is rarely without the company of youngsters from June to September. She also has a wide circle of friends to whom she is extremely loyal. As a result, her forays into the political world are fewer than before, although she finds time to support media watch groups and voter registration organizations. Last October, she also found time to join a group organized by one of her sons, whose members traveled to Cleveland for a week to work telephones for the Obama campaign and go door-to-door to get out the vote. "I was assigned to drive a van," she recalls. "I spent my days dropping people off at the polls, delivering chairs, water, apples, and other stuff. It was a wonderful experience. An incredibly loving atmosphere."

In summing up the dimensions of Anne Peretz's career, one salutes the artist whose uncompromising view of the world has produced work of undisputed quality, the social worker and

innovator whose caring instincts have brought comfort and insight to thousands of troubled families, and the activist who has always refused to be deflected from her values.

An accomplished woman, indeed.

PAUL BRODEUR, who lives in North Truro, was a staff writer for the New Yorker for many years. He is the author of more than a dozen books, including several novels and a collection of short stories. His latest novel describes the Puritan conquest, colonization, and ethnic cleansing of the Native People of New England from the perspective of a Nauset who was a boy living on Cape Cod when the Mayflower landed at Provincetown and Plymouth.

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Enchantment and Discontent

BERT YARBOROUGH'S SINGULAR AESTHETIC

By Rena Blau

ON FIRST ENTRY, the visitor to Bert Yarborough's winter exhibition at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum (March 13–May 3, 2009) could not help but turn to the left and look first at *WMD*, 2006, a showstopper depicting a masked head in oil and acrylic that takes up the entire wall.

The left side of the huge head reveals the delicate hatch-marks, fine graphic lines, and thin washes of paint of Yarborough's mark-making repertoire. On the right, broad horizontal strokes of paint render a carved mask, isolating the human from himself and from the viewer. The viewer's most innate and human sense—the ability to read another's face—is made questionable by this half face. Perhaps it is a ceremonial fire that appears in the contracted pupils in large white eyes the shape of perfect teardrops. Below, an angrier fire drips from the nose made of the chiseled marks resembling wood.

By juxtaposing the flaming spirit within and the negation of identifying marks in a single painting, Yarborough makes it clear that for him artistic experimentation is no frivolous activity but awakens the very basic hungers that art activates and its dislocation of the self in the universe. It is almost impossible to look away once having spent some time in front of Yarborough's paintings because of these two forces—familiarizing and defamiliarizing—at work.

In *Birdman*, 2008, Yarborough replaces the human body with a bird's, as if through painting he had accessed the animal within or, alternatively, turned the clock back to aviary time when we all bore flight but could not walk forward into small spaces. He imparts both an animalism and psychology to the form, showing the human in evident states of anxiety or arousal, abjection or dynamism, and even contemporaneity and prehistory—and often offering both polarities simultaneously.

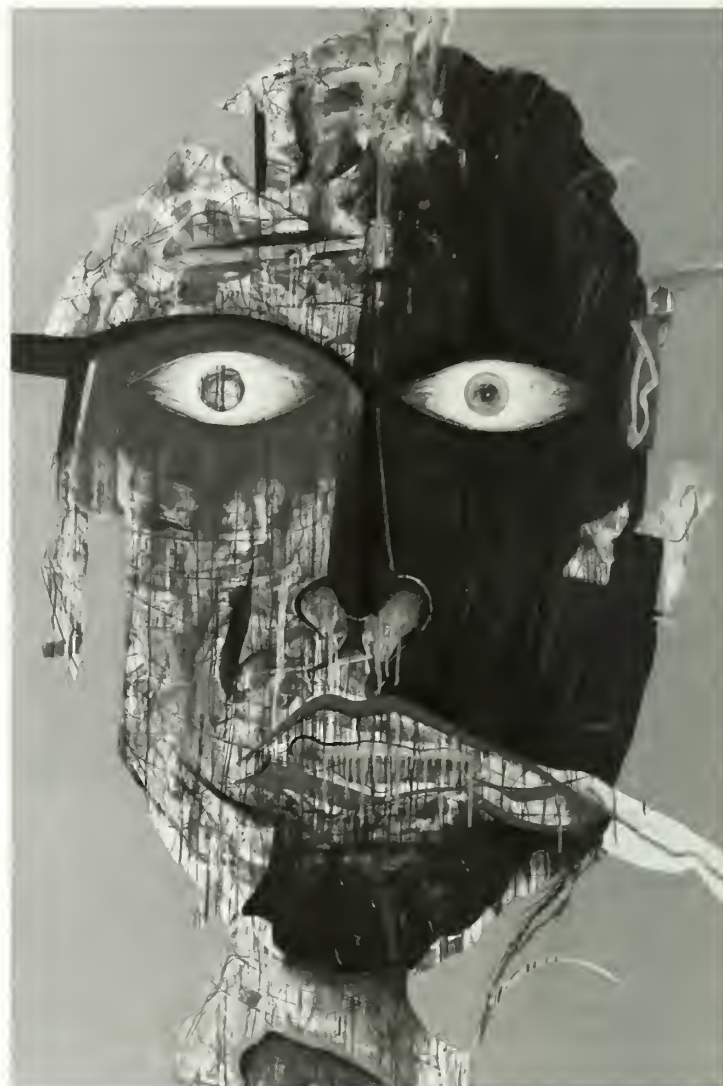
Having served two Fellowships at the Fine Arts Work Center (1977–1979), Yarborough spent years alone in the woods, bogs, and dunes of Provincelands creating site-specific sculpture. The materials he used were native and could be left to the elements. Very little trace of human involvement could be evidenced in the bundles and weaves he created with sticks, reeds, and dead pine. There were nests, shelters, and webs that came out of his study of architecture and copious drawing of natural forms. For *Bog Web*, a work from that period, for which he won an NEA grant, he interlaced branches and the interlacing went all the way around a cranberry bog.

Yarborough studied architecture and then received an MFA in Photography at the University of Iowa. His architectural studies involved rigorous draftsmanship. "It was work in Bauhaus design

and it was brutally rigorous," he described by phone last month. From this, he started making drawings with a rapidograph pen, a technical drawing pen with a .001 mm line—"a line like a thread." Basically, a magnifying glass slid onto the barrel of the pen. Looking through this lens, he would make drawings with lines that were so close together they would form gullies and peaks on the paper, looking like topographical contour maps. These drawings were his submission to the Fine Arts Work Center in 1976.

In his first week in Provincetown, he took a class on the Ecology of Cape Cod with the newly formed Center for Coastal Studies. The students, who represented the wide eclecticism of Provincetown in the '70s, met in a building in the former Chamber of Commerce Building overlooking the fishing fleet at McMillan Wharf. Every week, the crew of strangers learned about a different aspect of the ecology. They pored over topographical maps, took water samplings from tidal pools, and examined the different species of marine life. As he puts it, he became obsessed with the scale of the place and did realist drawings, as well as photographs, of different objects on the beach or in the dunes. He studied how animals moved through the tidal flats, how they burrowed, and the patterns they left behind.

FOR THREE SUMMERS, he and his wife, poet Cynthia Huntington, lived in a dune shack called Euphoria, as caretakers. They were helping Hazel Werner, a well-known Provincetown woman who had been Eugene O'Neill's nanny. Their days often were spent alone in each other's company with the shifting sands and primacy of light. The footsteps on the beach left there by Philip Malicoat's morning constitutional and the gift of vegetables from his garden left on the doorstep by nightfall were signs that they had not awoken on some other planet. Huntington's critically acclaimed *The Salt House* de-



WMD, 2006, OIL AND ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 72 BY 48 INCHES

scribes the time they spent living in the dune shack.

In 1984, Bert Yarborough went to Africa on a Fulbright Fellowship to study Yoruban carving in Nigeria with master carver Lamidi Fakeye. With the experience of an expatriate living in the underdeveloped world, Yarborough awoke to the visually laden drama and poignancy of man's relationship to his environment. To this day, he defines his trip as being a catalyst to his current journey as an artist. He speaks of the "disconcerting obsession" with which he keeps returning to the imagery that he brought back—birds, teardrops, ritual coupling, and ceremonial masks.

Yarborough is a member of the artist-run gallery artSTRAND, and his work is exhibited several times a summer in group and solo shows. He has enjoyed a close friendship with many of its members, such as Jim Peters, Paul Bowen, Bob Bailey, and Breon Dunigan, since they were all emerging artists with Fellowships at the FAWC. At the time of his exhibit at PAAM, artSTRAND exhibited his wonderfully rendered and wash-stained drawings of figures. There are marks that share

characteristics with works by artists as diverse as Roberto Sebastian Matta, Susan Rothenberg, Cy Twombly, Antoni Tàpies, and Jean-Michel Basquiat. As he took a break from a session of the FAWC Visual Committee, in the middle of evaluating the submissions for the next winter's Fellowships, he spoke with his characteristic gentility and affable manner. I was finding it hard, however, to ignore the beautiful and obscene contorted figures around him in various stages of arousal, turbulence, and even political confrontation with the viewer. He was comparing his experience of being in Provincetown and that of being a foreigner. "When I am here I am enveloped in a mist. When you are over there you're like a rabbit, totally aware of everything around you. You have a knife-like awareness. The work is really about the polarities, these two very different experiences weighing on each other, balancing each other."

Ever since these two intense experiences of place—one at an outermost house in Provincetown and the other in Africa—Yarborough has distinguished himself through this powerful stance toward the figure. He spent much of the decade upon his return from Africa painting abstractions involving the figure on unusual materials. From 1985 to 1990, Yarborough worked on large grommetted canvases, surplus material found at the Marine Specialties in Provincetown. They could be rolled or hung up easily. He went to California in a van with them, as well as into his new studio near the home he made in 1995 in White River Junction, Vermont. The tarps could be transported and worked on separately but combined for the large pieces he describes as "having a presence" or "being my size, pieces I can walk into."

The choice of the tarps illustrates his relationship to artwork as a verb rather than a noun. He

works on anything that fulfills the criteria of economy, practicality, and fortuity. The used bunk tarps also can be seen as working specifically against the framed canvas as an art object removed from the public good and its use value as a material. They cleverly suggest that Yarborough does not go out of his way to imbue each work with the aura of his originality and its preciousness as art object to be consumed as a commodity. Originality and enchantment they have in abundance by themselves, while they bear the traces of their own production.

While his figurative work strains against classicism, the beauty can be found in the unfurling energy of Yarborough's line as it describes human energies and their ultimate transcendence over alienation and discord. His most painterly gestures bear the distortions of time passage, as in *Find the Moon Again*, or erotic stimulation, as in *Who Am I?* and *Who Are You?* *Find the Moon Again* is a portrait with classical proportions that is nonetheless of our time. It shows a man looking resigned to sitting for the painter, even while a porous brushstroke alongside his face describes a nervous agitation of the future or the past.

On the far wall of the Patrons Gallery at PAAM, an enormous figure lies prone over three equal-size square panels, flanked by two others portraying the sun and the moon. The first panel contains the sun, the next three the figure, and the fifth the moon. The figure itself is part human, part insect, part landscape. The parts, both male and female, jut out like caps of the Himalayas. Inside the body lies a blood-pumping organ, linking the work to famous Tachiste Jean Fautrier, an association that bears fruit throughout. Like the great French painter, Yarborough's genius in depicting the human form tends toward showing the parts we tend not to put on display.

There are several suns and moons in this gallery. They are curious objects so I had to ask him about them when we spoke by phone in mid-April. "The sun and the moon are the last things I ever thought I'd be painting," he explained. "Can there be anything else that has been drawn, painted, or photographed more than the sun and the moon? I am aware that they are totally weighted, filled with centuries of meaning and resonance, natural, human, and symbolic. But I wanted to see what would happen if I took everything else out of the painting and left those. On the one hand, they are symbols. On the other, they are containers for paint."

It is not an accident that in the most recent paintings the sun and the moon appear in his work in place of the figure itself. These two celestial bodies are symbols par excellence of the polarities in general: Apollo, god of light and time, versus Bacchus, god of wine and the vine. Rather than a dialect, Yarborough's work can be seen as a deforming, unmasking, denuding of the human form to reach a singular aesthetic in which human joy and suffering become distilled as geological.

It is possible that black and white were never so richly luminous as in the two-paneled acrylic painting called *Together*, from 2004, a painting that resists forgetting. Each panel shows a man and woman sharing an ethereal body with breasts and genitalia appearing as sources of pink life in the dark galaxy. The bodies glow from within with a celestial light beneath a moon and a velvet black sky, looking both enchanted and discontented in equal measure.

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BIRDMAN, 2008, OIL AND ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 48 BY 72 INCHES

Provincetown: Crucible of Modernism

THE TOWN COLLECTION TRAVELS

By Taylor M. Polites

FROM SEPTEMBER 15 through November 23 of 2008, forty of the finest and most representative works of the Town of Provincetown's municipally owned art collection hung in the de Menil Gallery at the Groton School in Groton, Massachusetts. The show was entitled "Provincetown: Crucible of Modernism."

"It's certainly the largest and most comprehensive show of Provincetown work that has ever travelled from the Town Collection," explains Stephen Borkowski, chair of Provincetown's Art Commission. "This is the first time such a large body of work from the Town Collection had travelled so far and off Cape."

The idea came from a chance encounter at a dinner several years ago. In the course of conversation, John Tyler, curator of the de Menil Gallery, discovered through Borkowski that Provincetown's Art Commission oversaw a collection of some four hundred works of art ranging from recent regional landscapes to career-making masterpieces. "I said I have a gallery that always needs to borrow a show," Tyler remembers, "so that's how the idea got going. The intention was to give exposure to the Town Collection and to show the tension between Modernists and Traditionalists over the course of history in Provincetown."

The two men identified forty works that were not only the finest pieces but also showed the breadth of artistic production in Provincetown



E. AMBROSE WEBSTER, *SNOW SCENE*, 1915, OIL ON CANVAS, 29 BY 39 INCHES, COLLECTION OF THE TOWN OF PROVINCETOWN

during the twentieth century. The show included works by Charles Hawthorne, Oliver Chaffee and Ada Gilmore, William and Lucy L'Engle, Edwin Dickinson, Blanche Lazzell, Mary Hackett, Karl Knaths, Agnes Weinrich, Ross Moffett, Bruce McKain, and LaForce Bailey among others. "We focus very much on Provincetown and the things that occurred here," Borkowski says, "but the fact is these people were exhibiting nationally and internationally. It just boggles the mind. A lot of these things have not even made it into the art history books. The next twenty years of art scholarship is going to underscore the importance of Provincetown as a crossroads. They all came through here. It was indeed the crucible of Modernism."

"Posing Hawthorne's *Cleaning Fish* against the *Cubist Still Life* by Lucy L'Engle sums up the meaning of the show," Tyler offers. "They were made not very far apart from each other [in years]. It's interesting that L'Engle was painting these things only a decade after Braque and Picasso in Paris." The art schools of Hawthorne, Webster, and Browne were already well established when this influx of ideas began during the First World War. The sudden arrival of expatriate artists with European experience woke up the sleepy fishing community and turned it into a radical bohemian resort. Small wonder that

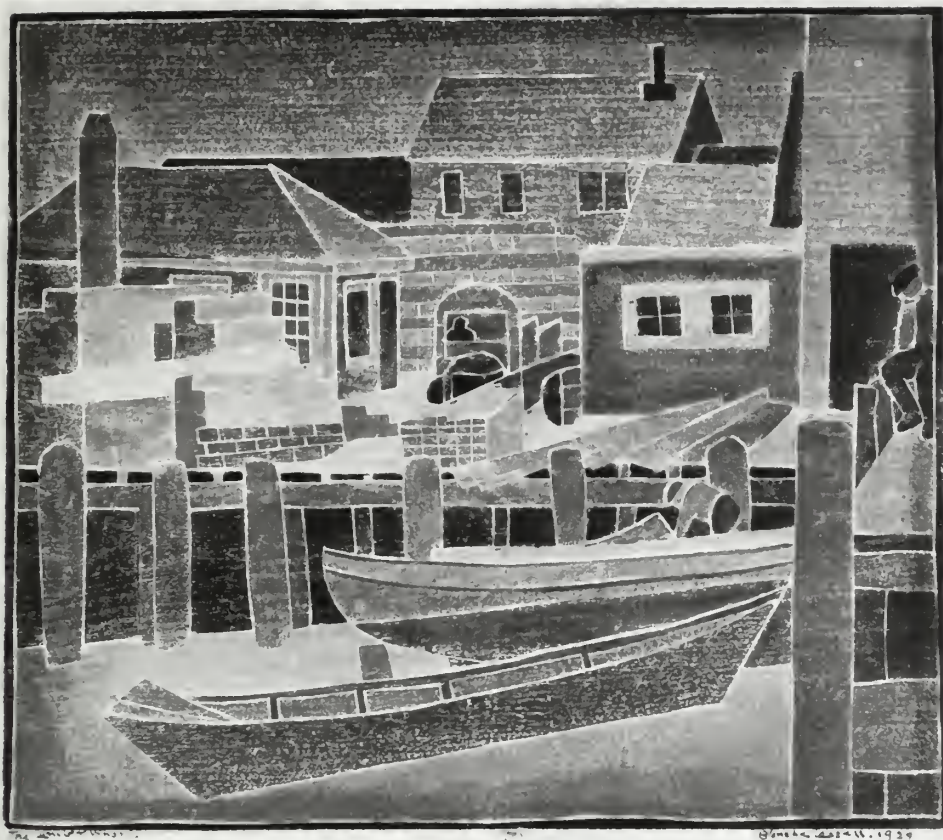
new ways of seeing nature, color, light, and form were developed along Provincetown's beaches and waterfronts.

The town became the beneficiary of this creative ferment. After completing the monumental *Crew of the Philomena Manta* in 1915, Charles Hawthorne donated it to the town. *Cleaning Fish* followed soon after that. Of the forty works displayed in the de Menil Gallery, nine were donated to the town by the artists who produced them. According to artist and former Art Commission chair Salvatore Del Deo, who was also represented in the show, "Hawthorne may have had his faults socially, but they all agreed that he was a very generous man and that he went out of his way to help young painters." Other artists followed suit, like Edwin Dickinson (*Back Beach, Truro*) and Gerrit Beneker (*Net Mender of Provincetown*). By 1976, the town held over one hundred paintings displayed in the Town Hall and other buildings.

By then, Del Deo and his wife, Josephine, had completed the gargantuan task of creating and opening the Provincetown Heritage Museum, originally the 1860 Center Methodist Church. As Josephine, the director of the museum from 1976 to 1995, relates, "Sal and I really put skates on and ... by the time I retired out of the building in 1995, ... there were 199 works that had come under our purview in the Heritage [Museum]." Through charm and trust, they had tripled the collection of art held by the town. And if there is any question about the quality of the works acquired by the Del Deos, it should be noted that twenty-five of the



OLIVER L. CHAFFEE, *STILL LIFE*, 1931, OIL ON CANVAS, 77.5 BY 59.5 INCHES, COLLECTION OF THE TOWN OF PROVINCETOWN, GIFT OF HELEN EDEL BUKER



BLANCHE LAZZELL, *THE LUMBER WHARF*, 1929, COLOR WOODCUT, 12 BY 14 INCHES, COLLECTION OF THE TOWN OF PROVINCETOWN

forty pieces displayed at the Groton show were acquired during Josephine Del Deo's tenure at the Heritage Museum. "I knew the painters," Salvatore remembers, "and I would just say, 'Look, it's for the town.' And they would give them to me to give to the town."

Josephine is modest. "You have to say that it was really Sal who knew these things. I knew some of them. But because I was married to him at that point and we'd been together already twenty-five years just about, I'd learned an awful lot about everything here." Indeed, she had. Josephine Del Deo has been an activist, chronicler, historian, and custodian of Provincetown's material culture for half a century.

Some of the most prominent single artist collections came to the town under the watchful eyes of Salvatore and Josephine. Their good friend Albert Edel had been a friend of Oliver Chaffee, the well-known Fauvist artist. After Chaffee's death a large amount of his work was being thrown away, Josephine remembers, and "Edel himself had rescued them from going to the dump." After Edel's death, his daughter called and Sal remembers that "she said, 'I don't know what to do with them. They're a nuisance.' They had no value at all. No value." Art collectors today would find a much easier time estimating their value. The Town Collection was augmented with thirty-one Chaffee oils and watercolors through this gift from Helen Edel Buker.

Similarly, the Del Deos had been friends with the L'Engles and their daughter, Madeleine. Josephine relates, "There was a disruption between her and her parents, so that when Lucy died, who was a very prolific painter and a very good one, [Madeleine] just wanted to get rid of everything. And because of our friendship, be-

cause we knew her very well, she called Sal one day and she said, 'Sal, you come over here. You come over here and get what you want because it's going to the dump.' Well, we got in the car as fast as our legs could carry us." The Town Collection was the beneficiary of four works by Lucy L'Engle and sixteen works by William L'Engle.

"We have been so lucky," Sal recalls. "We have known people . . . these people were so kind and good to us. They were such noble people." They remember old friends such as John and Miriam Hapgood DeWitt, who gave two Chaffees and Lucy L'Engle's *Cubist Still Life* to the town. Or summer residents Harold Grey and his wife, who donated works by William Bicknell, Ross Braught, Blanche Lazzell, and Tod Lindenmuth, all of which were featured in the Groton show. Josephine continues, "We have been privileged as Sal said to know these people intimately and to know not only them but their work, their beautiful homes and their studios."

Borkowski recognizes the role the Del Deos have played in the community. "We owe a great debt to the Del Deos' having the vision and foresight to assemble a collection like this and to safeguard it all these years. Everything I do is built on work done by my predecessors. I am the keeper at this period. It's really extraordinary that we have this legacy and it is in the condition that it is in and that it continues to be viewed as a cultural asset."

Julie Heller, gallery owner and former chair of the Art Commission, agrees. "It's something to be able to assemble [a collection] like that. It's not just the value, not just oil paintings, prints, everything. It's the overview, the thoughtfulness of it. [This is] the legacy of what the town was, the history of it as an art colony." She continues, "It's museum caliber. Look at those Hawthornes.

People would die for it." She reflects that it is the relationship between the townspeople and the artists that created such a unique environment. She believes that support is still there. "Look at what we have. We have the Provincetown Art Association and Museum with the school and their association with the Cape Cod Community College. We have the Fine Arts Work Center and MassArt. You have Ted Malone and his studios, trying to have affordable studios for artists. All of that makes a difference. There are not any towns that I know of that reach out the way Provincetown does." Nor any town that has the art collection that Provincetown does. John Tyler says, "I don't know [of any other artists colonies] where artists are so close to the town to want to donate works. I just can't think of a comparable collection. It's a real treasure."

Making sure that treasure is shared is one of the current Art Commission chair's goals. "I couldn't help but think how this spark might catch fire in generations to come," Borkowski reflects. "Who knows who we're influencing by exposure to this to get them thinking about Provincetown in a new way. We are showing them the range of works that came out of here. And, more importantly, the fact that this was always a creative, supportive environment for artists."

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Nora Speyer and Sideo Fromboluti

By Budd Hopkins

IN THE 1950s, New York's fabled Abstract Expressionist years and the time of the Artists' Club and the Cedar Bar, most artists—always a fraternal bunch—were living at the edge of insolvency. We welcomed any rumored late evening get-togethers we'd heard about because a party could involve some sociable pleasure at the lowest cost imaginable. Almost every weekend a bring-your-own party would materialize somewhere, in some artist's studio, and the word would magically spread. These spartan gatherings—featuring little more than a makeshift bar in a large, paint-spattered room with a curtained-off storage rack and an easel and palette table temporarily shoved into a corner—usually came about like this: Earlier that evening the location would have been passed around the Cedar, and if you didn't know the artist hosting it you penciled down the name and address on a wet cocktail napkin and prepared to kill a few more hours at the bar lest you arrive too early and stand revealed as the uninvited crasher you actually were. An alcoholic Emily Post, if such a woman ever existed, would have stated that, crasher or not, you must bring either a six-pack of beer or a jug of cheap wine—the kind that comes in in a tank truck from New Jersey and is simply labeled “Red Wine.” That was the guest's price of admission, while the host was expected to provide at least some of the same rotgut as well as paper cups, ice, and, ideally, some cheap cheddar and a big bag of potato chips. Naturally the last two items made the guests thirsty, so the wine and beer went quickly and the line at the john door grew ever more impatient.

That was what it was like when, sometime around 1955, I crashed a party and met the hosts, Nora Speyer and Sideo Fromboluti. Despite my uninvited status we hit it off, and, according to Sideo's embarrassingly acute memory, I stayed until about three a.m., talking about painting, theirs, mine and everyone else's, and over the unbelievable fifty-four years that have followed, the three of us have become the closest of friends. My recollection of the party where we met has to do, first, with its unusual setting: instead of a grungy loft it was an apartment in Peter Cooper Village, a large, middle-income complex with many rental units on each floor. So that night, instead of climbing the usual dusty, splintery set of stairs in an old loft building that had once, perhaps, housed a tiny, struggling garment factory, I discovered that the Frombolutis lived at the end of a long, immaculately unencumbered hallway in a normal, two-bedroom apartment. In fact, they were an actual family with a real little girl—eventually the painter and teacher Iona Fromboluti—and a preteen boy, Chris, who would become a sought-after architect designing government em-



SIDEO FROMBOLUTI AND NORA SPEYER, 1945

bassies in various exotic locales. I was amazed to see that Sideo and Nora had turned their typical New York apartment into a kind of bohemian loft space, sleeping in a wide, colorfully draped bed in the living area and stashing the children in the smaller of the two bedrooms while they used the other as their joint studio.

I recall that Nora, a slim, striking-looking woman with an intense gaze, was wearing long, glittering, Baroque earrings, a fashion trademark she maintains to this day, and that the apartment walls and furniture were bedecked with exotic objects and fabrics of one sort or another. The particular stylistic mix they favored then—and now, even more so, since the necessary funds have become available—defies any precise designation. In their present home there are Greek vases, Sicilian toys, pre-Columbian terra-cottas, a Benin bronze, Baroque platters, and even a George Inness landscape and a group of stunning Buddhist sculptures. However, the apartment I party-crashed that night in 1955 contained only the seeds of such esthetic opulence, where on the walls, beautifully displayed, were a number of their own paintings and drawings.

The three of us sat on the bed, sipping wine and talking about our work, but at some point—late that night or another?—we went into the studio and they showed me their latest canvases. Fifty-four years ago, Sideo was a slender, handsome man who spoke with a low-keyed fire about his paintings and the esthetic problems he was dealing with, and though the fire and the handsomeness remain, the slenderness has slipped just a little. But that night I was taken aback to learn that Sideo and Nora had each carved a little personal floor space out of the fifteen-by-twelve-foot converted bedroom, and, it seemed, were working

productively and quite separately. In those early years, Nora had begun her series of mythological paintings—*Prometheus Chained*, and *Expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden*—explaining that she “always had to have a subject to paint,” meaning, perhaps, a kind of mythic, or even spiritual theme. She insists that even in those early years she was never an abstractionist, though she was drawn to the Abstract Expressionists because of their paint handling. She says she liked to “throw paint around” and thus, “I got to AbEx more quickly than Sideo,” who, she adds, “painted more thinly, more classically and neater” than she did. It seems, then, that the enormously thick surfaces that feature so prominently in their later work were more due to Nora's influence on Sideo than his on her. It is because of these heavily worked and reworked surfaces that some people find their painting styles uncomfortably close when in fact Nora's subject matter—her disturbing *Falling Women* and her *Death and the Maiden* juxtapositions, to say nothing of her serpents and death's-heads and demonic figures—is a far cry from Sideo's landscape triptychs, his still lifes and nightclub scenes. As he puts it, he is the more analytical, spatially abstract artist while in his view Nora is the more psychological. “I love the German Expressionists,” she tells me. “Nolde . . . Max Beckmann.” Sideo adds, a bit hyperbolically, “And I hated them.”

This brings up another facet of their sixty-five-year marriage: they love to argue—at home, in front of company, on the Cape, in New York, in restaurants, and, in effect, wherever they happen to be. But when one thinks about it, if Nora and Sideo decline the usual bourgeois emotional concealments (as they do), these two artists, married for decades and living within a tightly bonded collegueship, are bound to disagree often—even to

battle openly without concern to their friends' opinions. In fact, most of us who have known Sideo and Nora for decades have come to see their verbal brawls as almost endearing.

Though it may seem counterintuitive, I feel that their frequent (almost ritual) disagreements spring from their highly unusual closeness, from the way their two lives are enmeshed at almost every moment. Rarely, in my experience, have I encountered one without the other, whether it's at a gallery meeting, a visit to the Metropolitan Museum, a shopping trip in downtown Wellfleet, or in their Cape or New York studios—work spaces that are, as they were from the beginning, quite distinct though comprising one single area. Their decades-long physical closeness, their apparent lack of even temporarily separate existences, does not mean that their heads are as one; in fact, nothing can be further from the truth. Their minds, their inner lives, seem every bit as different as their physical lives seem wedded together. They are, in a way, like contentious Siamese twins who love to argue.

Essentially their differences spring from Sideo's cooler, more objective, more classical temperament and Nora's fiery Expressionism. For example, both have spoken to me of their love of the work of Edvard Munch, but with very different emphases. Nora tells me of her fascination with his intense vision and emotion, while Sideo talks about Munch's powerful, bravura statement of the "facts of life" in a repressive age. He points out that as a painter, Munch was extremely uneven—sometimes "very bad, even clumsy," a problem that doesn't seem to faze Nora, the Expressionist, who is enchanted by his nearly continuous mystical explorations.

Such talk of painting and of individual artists is common whenever the three of us meet, whether it's around a convivial table or in one of our studios, in front of recent works. For decades it always has been this way. As an example, I remember that many years ago April Kingsley, my former wife, and I went to a small dinner that Nora and Sideo hosted in the cabin they had rented on Slough Pond. The third guest that evening was Katherine Kuh, the prominent art critic and former curator of modern art at the Chicago Art Institute, who had become a good friend of the Frombolutis. After dinner, Sideo, Nora, and I became embroiled in a senseless, wheel-spinning game that artists nevertheless seem to enjoy occasionally: the game of listing, in descending order, our personal choices for "The Greatest Modern Painters." For a while, April and Katherine stayed out of the battle as we three painters argued passionately: Picasso versus Matisse. Who's better? Who's next best? Mondrian? Miró? Bonnard? Léger? (I was enamored with Léger's work at the time.) And on and on we went. It was getting rather heated as I recall, over the basic Picasso-Matisse first-place choice, when finally, in a rather small voice, Katherine Kuh spoke up: "I think Paul Klee is the greatest artist of the twentieth century." The three of us whirled on her, incredulous, and in one voice yelled, "PAUL KLEE?" as if she'd said Walt Disney or Adolf Hitler. A minute before, Sideo, Nora, and I



NORA SPEYER, *DEATH AND THE MAIDEN*, 1995, OIL ON CANVAS, 60 BY 60 INCHES

had been fiercely disagreeing about our personal rankings, but Katherine's out-of-left-field naming of Paul Klee—whom we all actually admired—was so unbelievable that it united us in shock.

Katherine Kuh herself was a feisty, opinionated woman with a fund of great anecdotes about her many experiences with art world personalities such as Marcel Duchamp, Edwin Dickinson and the great collector Walter Arensberg, whom she apparently offended by stating that some of his pre-Columbian artifacts might not be 100 percent kosher. According to her story, Arensberg thereupon decided to give his magnificent collection of works by Brancusi, Duchamp, Mondrian, and, yes, Paul Klee, to the Philadelphia Museum instead of the Chicago Art Institute. Katherine was always steadfast in her views, no matter how undiplomatic they may be, and for her part Nora always admired her friend's steely core of strength. "She's so VIRILE!" she said to me one day in her surprisingly authoritative tone of voice, thus awarding Katherine her highest praise.

REMARKABLY, the Frombolutis have recently celebrated their sixty-fifth wedding anniversary, and Sideo loves to tell the story of how it all began. They met and fell in love as students at the Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia, but Nora's father, a wealthy Jewish businessman, was appalled by their relationship. Sideo was from a poor Italian-American family, and for all the reasons one might expect in those benighted times, the Spey-

ers were determined that such a person would never, never take their youngest daughter away from them. Mr. Speyer, Sideo eventually learned from a sympathetic dean at Tyler, had tried and failed to have him expelled from the art school, where he was regarded as one of its finest, most talented students. A few years later, during World War II, Sideo joined the army and Nora, defying her parents, came to live with him, off the reservation. He records in an unpublished but marvelous memoir that in 1944, and for a number of reasons, the couple decided to legalize things and to marry. Despite the fact that Nora had landed a menial job, they had very little money between them, but on New Year's Day, 1944, a disapproving judge in rural Missouri, across the river from Kansas City, agreed to pronounce them man and wife. However, after paying the judge and taking the trolley back to Kansas City, they realized they had no money left to get back to Fort Riley, and Sideo's week-end pass would soon expire. Desperate, he telegraphed his father in Philadelphia, informing him, without details, that he had just gotten married, and that he immediately needed \$25 to avoid being AWOL. Bride and groom sat in a Western Union office for hours, waiting, but eventually the \$25 arrived and they were saved.

Many years later Sideo said that at some point, after perhaps forty years of marriage, it suddenly struck him: "I was telling my father I'd just gotten married, and asked him for \$25 dollars to get back to camp. And that's exactly what



SIDEO FROMBOLUTI, *FISHERMEN IN THE RAIN*, 1994, OIL ON CANVAS, 40 BY 40 INCHES

he sent me. \$25 dollars. My God, he could have sent \$50! Or even a little bit more. It was my wedding day, after all. The more I thought about it, the madder I got."

It took many more years, and, probably, the death of Nora's father, before the Speyers seemed to absorb the reality of their daughter's marriage to a non-Jewish, Italian-American, putative Roman Catholic artist, of all things. (Perhaps, to them, the artist part was the worst of all.) As Sideo puts it with a little ironic exaggeration, it was not until their son, Chris, entered college that Nora's family finally faced reality and gave in. They had been married many years before she and Sideo were able to live quite comfortably.

ONE OF THE much remarked upon aspects of Sideo and Nora's combined professional lives is its extreme orderliness. Though age and illness have recently affected their usual routines, this is the way they usually functioned every Monday through Friday: They arose early and walked to their Soho studio. There, in a long, floor-through area, they would work in their separate spaces, often on perfectly square canvases that came in roughly two sizes. Neither of them ever seems to have deviated by producing small or unusually proportioned oil paintings, or experimented in different media, though lately Sideo has produced a series of beautiful landscapes in pastel. It was their habit to draw in charcoal on full sheets of fine paper, and, as far as I know, Nora is the only one who has dared to attach drawn-on paper sections to her figure drawings to produce a hybrid species of magnificent collage-drawings.

The pair would work until late afternoon and then either have dinner at a restaurant or return to their Greenwich Village townhouse. The next day, more of the same. No burning the midnight oil, no erratic habits, no going to the studio in unpredictable spurts. On Saturdays they visited museums and galleries, and Sundays were apparently regarded as days of rest. (For Sideo, Sunday afternoons were often spent watching sports on TV.)

The paintings of neither are deemed finished until their surfaces have been worked up to a maximum richness and complexity. Once, in company with April and Katherine Kuh, we saw, in Nora's studio area, a landscape that she'd been working on for perhaps a week. It struck me as marvelous, painted thickly in some areas and thinly, freshly in others. "It's terrific," I said. "It's finished. Don't touch it." Katherine agreed. "But it's not finished," Nora said with a hint of defiant exasperation. Katherine and I carried on about its present, amazingly rich state, but Nora was insistent: "It's not finished." A few hours later I did something I'd never done. I called her from home and pleaded with her to at least leave the canvas alone for a few days so she could have more time to view it objectively. No luck. In a few weeks I saw the painting again, finished now but to my eye having lost its spontaneity. However, the experience taught me a few things: first, that no artist, looking at another, very different artist's work, really knows how he, himself, would finish it if he had to, and therefore when he says "don't touch it," he's admitting he likes it as it is and hasn't the slightest idea of how he could go about improving it. My objections, therefore, had

more to do with my own helplessness in front of Nora's inspired start than anything else. Second, I realized that Nora—and Sideo too—know exactly what they're doing and precisely how they can bring their paintings to conclusion, so no extraneous comments will make much difference. An obvious sign of great self-confidence and maturity as artists.

Another aspect of their joint orderliness has to do with subject matter. It was their habit, in the summer, to paint only landscapes, and, in Nora's case, sometimes flowers in the woods. Neither did any painting of the figure, though some of Sideo's Higgin's Pond paintings include a few distant fishermen. In the winter, however, both chose to work with the human figure, often on a distinct theme. Sideo's *Entertainers* series includes many images of the belly dancers he'd watched in a Greek restaurant near his Chelsea studio. Later came his *Night Out* paintings, each of which depicts a group of seated figures at a table illuminated by candles or by odd lamps whose strange and beautiful lighting conditions either pull together or isolate the various figures.

One might assume from my descriptions that these paintings could suggest noise or movement or even a Lautrecian cabaret atmosphere, but in reality they are some of the quietest works one can imagine. Possibly as a result of his early interest in Abstract Expressionist paintings, Sideo keeps the space of these scenes extremely close to the picture plane, and the thick, crusty paint surface serves to underscore this relative two-dimensionality. Even in his Cape Cod landscapes, the space he creates is rather snug, with very little illusion of palpable depth. In its own way, the space in a Fromboluti is closer to that of a later de Kooning than it is to the space of an early Monet. In fact, with many of Sideo's works I find myself examining and enjoying the paint itself for several minutes before images of a tree trunk or lily pads come into focus.

This "abstract" quality is something that Nora shares with her husband, even though, instead of a calm group of people seated in a nightclub, she may be giving us a terrified nude woman facing the hooded, skeletal image of Death himself. The characteristic imagery of her New York figure paintings is often disturbing in the way that an Edvard Munch is disturbing. Her titles themselves set the tone: *Nightmare With Serpent*, *Expulsion*, *Falling Women*, *Troubled Night*, *Death and the Maiden*, and *Nightmare With Serpent* provide samples. Yet because of her complex paint surfaces and the shallow, non-illusionistic space she uses, these unsettling images tend to suggest dreams, insubstantial hallucinations, or haunting reveries rather than something real and physically present. They do not have the instantaneous shock of something like Munch's famous—and extremely graphic—*The Scream*, but are closer to his calmer, more meditative works such as *The Sick Child*, *The Vampire*, or *Madonna*, paintings in which the figures are embedded in a painterly, almost palpable atmosphere.

I've found that the longer one stays with Nora's strange figure paintings, the more a spirit of eeriness settles into one's bones, and the more diffi-

cult it becomes to remember just how gorgeous and untroubled her summer landscapes and flower paintings actually are. As I've said, I've known the two of them for over a half century, and yet I still have no idea of the source of the demons and troubled maidens who populate Nora's paintings. In reality she is a calm, steady, intelligent woman from a privileged background, a wife, a mother, and a grandmother . . . but still there are those evil, coiling serpents . . . shrieking bats . . . empty-eyed skulls. . . . Over the years I've become somewhat inured to their continuous mood of imminent danger, but at least Nora never allows Death to win; she lets the threatened, unclothed women in her work survive to appear again and again, as if she and Munch and Luis Bunuel were collaborating on a decades-long Pearl White cliffhanger.

IN CONSIDERING another medium in which Nora and Sideo both are masters, their charcoal figure drawings often present an alternative kind of visual reality: a world in which the depicted images exist in a much more familiar three-dimensional space. Sideo's figure drawings—most often female busts and heads—are resolutely traditional in their accuracy and illusionism; in fact, many seem almost portraits rather than figure drawings. Nora, too, often leaves the page untouched around her lovingly rendered heads, although many of her larger charcoal studies are for paintings of elaborately entwined figures or nudes either partially wrapped in robes or positioned behind a few pillows.

However, the contrasts between a black-and-white study and the final oil painting can sometimes be quite strong. As an example, one of her 1997 *Falling Women* paintings, entitled *Dream Sequence III*, has a kind of all-over color scheme in which yellow splotches dance on and around a generalized pale violet snarl of bodies. Despite its alarming subject, the painting has a somewhat decorative quality and its shallow space is almost two-dimensional. But by contrast, the space depicted in her superb charcoal drawing for this painting, *Dream Sequence V*, 1996, is starkly illusionistic. As in the painting, it shows the two women's bodies falling with a heavy drape tangled around them, but here every contour is handled with sharp-focused clarity, and the result is the complete absence of the final painting's gentler coloristic harmony. I find it interesting that Nora can, with extreme skill, manipulate two very different spatial systems, and that therefore her crisp, dramatically three-dimensional drawings sometimes appear stronger than the softer, more



SIDEO FROMBOLUTI, *STORMY DAY*, 1974, CHARCOAL ON PAPER, 22 BY 28 INCHES

two-dimensional and tonally subtle paintings that she bases upon them.

Nora Speyer greatly admires the mystical French artist Odilon Redon. "He's one of my FAVORITES," she says with characteristic emphasis, but whereas Redon was something of a miniaturist, rendering his unsettling imagery in small but magnificent lithographs and modestly sized paintings and pastels, Nora expands her equally unsettling world into very large, rich, densely painted oils. It's as if she deliberately makes her haunted females to be so close to life-size that,



Wilhelm von Gloeden The Photographer's Studio in Taormina, c.1890

Photographs **Larry Collins Fine Art** Fine Objects
 145 Commercial Street #2 Provincetown, MA www.larrycollinsfineart.com

viewers are forced into emotionally confrontations with them—person to person and eye to eye.

But not surprisingly, it is Nora's unusual black-and-white collage-drawings that most closely bring to mind Redon's nearly Surrealist black-and-white lithos. In 1996 she exhibited a group of sixteen of them at the Denise Bibro gallery in a stunning but unnerving show of works with titles like *Nightmare With Serpent*, *Haunted Youth*, *Secrets*, and *The Abduction*. In this unforgettable exhibition she showed herself to be the master of an unusual mix of media: charcoal, black oil paint diluted with turpentine, and pasted, drawn-on paper. Unfortunately for all of us, and despite her mastery, it is a media mix to which she has not returned since.

SEVERAL TIMES in our many conversations, Sideo and I have shared our enthusiasm for a particular van Gogh painting in the Philadelphia Museum of Art that depicts, under heavy rainfall, the closed asylum garden at Saint-Rémy. Sideo says that without question it's the wettest rain picture he's ever seen. In van Gogh's version the asylum garden looks genuinely cold, gray, and wet, as if the sky is nearly filled with driving, diagonal streams of falling water. This painting, which Sideo has returned to again and again since childhood, has surely influenced his numerous and extraordinary landscape paintings of falling summer rain, but it is perhaps in his drawings that he has experimented most consistently with the imagery of rain. Though

Sideo Fromboluti is without doubt a superb draughtsman, a skill that has been recognized since his student years, and though he has at his disposal many different drawing techniques, he excels in a kind of painterly charcoal and ink medium whose effects are very close to those of his oils. One such drawing, *Stormy Day*, 1974, reproduced in the catalog of his 1998 "Summer Painting" retrospective, is a particularly beautiful example of his fluid technique, and is one of a surprising six works in his show that depict storms and falling rain. (One storm painting even includes a brilliant bolt of lightning.)

Whenever the paintings of Fromboluti and Speyer are being discussed, the issue that seems most controversial is that of their incredibly thick accretions of over-painted oil color. I alluded earlier to this aspect of their work, a perceived problem that I think has a simple explanation. Taken as *physical facts* and in close-up, their heavy, irregular surfaces resemble bits of nature, such as tree bark or a grassy swath or a rocky cliff. Because of this, the shared painterly technique Nora and Sideo employ in their landscapes seems not only appropriate but greatly supportive of the images that are being displayed. But, on the other hand, when Nora depicts naked, youthful flesh, there can be a strain between the nude's normally smooth skin and the irregular, hyperactive paint surface that represents it in the finished painting. In Sideo's case, the problem seems to arise less often because of the subjects he chooses: a spotted, messy palette table, as irregular in reality as

the pitted surface of its painted version, or, similarly, the broken, arbitrary light in his candle-lit nightclub scenes. In his later years he has only infrequently painted nudes (though he loves to draw them), and thus he usually avoids a problem that Nora has so frequently had to face. Over the decades they have never abandoned their complex painterly technique, and seem able to use it with increasing refinement.

RECENTLY, on a bright, distinctly non-rainy spring day in Greenwich Village, Nora, Sideo, and I sat at the edge of their beautiful garden and talked about our feelings for many different landscape painters. Sideo complained that for him, Monet lacked "a sense of the mystery of landscape," and, as it were, "painted the outside" of nature but missed its real heart. By contrast, he said, van Gogh's Saint-Rémy painting captured the dampness, the mud, the rain, and the cool air of the place, and miraculously turned it into a beautiful painting as well. Clearly for years this kind of magical transformation has been one of Sideo's most consistent goals and the emotional source of some of his finest paintings.

When one looks back at the European and American art of the twentieth century, one does not find a plethora of great landscape paintings. Our two most admired painters, Picasso and Matisse, never placed the genre anywhere near the center of their art, and even someone like Bonnard, who actually produced many landscape paintings, was less successful there than he was with his intimate interiors and still lifes, two subjects that did not require him to deal with palpably deep, three-dimensional space. And even so resolute a realist as Edward Hopper was most successful when one of his bland, undistinguished landscapes contained a lonely, and lovingly painted building or two. An argument can be made that in America, over the last century, Nora Speyer and Sideo Fromboluti have few rivals in the historically important genre of landscape painting, and that, all apart from their other successful endeavors, their shared ability to capture "the magic at the heart of nature" alone assures them a secure place in the history of twentieth-century American art.

BUDD HOPKINS is a painter and sculptor who, along with Speyer and Fromboluti, was a founding member of the fabled Long Point Gallery in Provincetown. His works are in many museum collections, including the Guggenheim, the Whitney, MoMA, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and the Provincetown Art Association and Museum. A memoir of his life, his fifth published book, will appear this summer under the title Art, Life and UFOs and will be available through Amazon.com.



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E. Ambrose Webster

CHASING THE SUN

BY GAIL SCOTT

HUDSON HILLS PRESS, 2009

A BOOK REVIEW BY TAYLOR M. POLITES

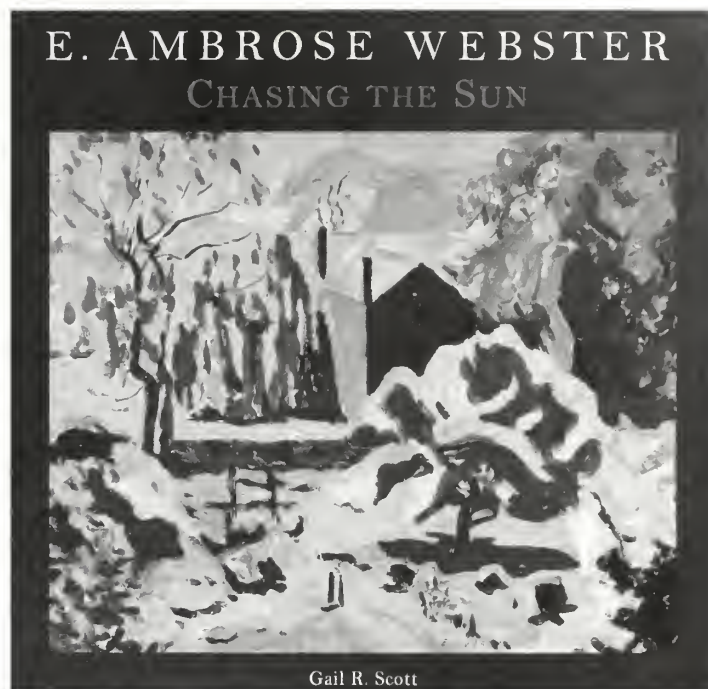
E AMBROSE WEBSTER (1869–1935) was a bold and innovative colorist and a leading member of the generation of Modernist artists that expanded the innovations of Impressionism and influenced the development of Abstract Expressionism. He was recognized and lauded during his lifetime, yet until today, the field of scholarship on Webster has remained thin. His name is little recognized outside of Provincetown, but Gail Scott hopes to change that. She has written a beautifully illustrated and authoritative biography that moves Webster (and Provincetown) much closer to the center of the artistic ferment of the early twentieth century.

With painstaking research over a period of years, Scott reassembled Webster's life and work history, including his art school in Provincetown, his exhibition history, and the critical acclaim that often greeted his works. "I pulled together his exhibition career and the reviews of his exhibitions from 1906 to 1935 and beyond: it just became clear that he knocked everybody out. That was a big revelation," she says. She has lifted the veil on Webster as a thinking artist, both aware of and part of the international scene, but confident of his abilities and direction. He was an innovator, fearless in experimentation, which constantly pushed his work in new directions.

After studying at the Museum School in Boston (where he was exposed to the French Impressionist movement) and at the Académie Julian in Paris (where he absorbed the latest in

European art), Webster opened his Summer School of Painting in Provincetown in 1900. He would continue to teach until his death in 1935, spending summers on Cape Cod and wintering in various tropical and Mediterranean locations that all had one thing in common: intense sunlight. Like many of his peers, the quest to capture light on canvas was a focus.

Scott describes how Webster seemed to intuit the structure of his paintings, but used the depiction of light and color (one and the same for Webster) to capture his viewer, to impart the experience of sunlight and its effect on the physical world. "If you half-close your eyes when you're looking at a Webster painting of Bermuda or Jamaica," she explains, "it isn't the imagery. It isn't what's being depicted, a house or tropical foliage. It's what he did with paint. That is what made him remarkable." A striking example is his 1916 painting *Building Blocks, Bermuda*. In Webster fashion, the work is structured in bands of bright color. White granite blocks from a quarry occupy the foreground. Yellow earth stretches across the middle, anchored by a bright red house flanked by more glaring white from the stone houses around it. The top third of the canvas is pale blue, the ocean and sky bleached out by the



Gail R. Scott

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As his career progressed, Webster focused more and more on structure. He was familiar with the theories of Cubists Albert Gleizes (whom he met in France), Gino Severini, and Jean Metzinger; like them, he studied the work of pre-Renaissance and Renaissance masters such as Giotto, Cimabue, Masaccio, and Botticelli. In his archives, he left behind detailed studies of these artists' works in which he explored their geometric configuration. The influence is clear in his canvases from the 1920s. In particular *Anemone, La Gaude, France* depicts a woman seated before a bowl of anemones flanked by children, with halo-like palms framing her face. The work evidences Webster's continued fascination with light and also shows Cubist inspired structure and a reference to the architecture and iconography of medieval religious art, a sort of Modernist Madonna.

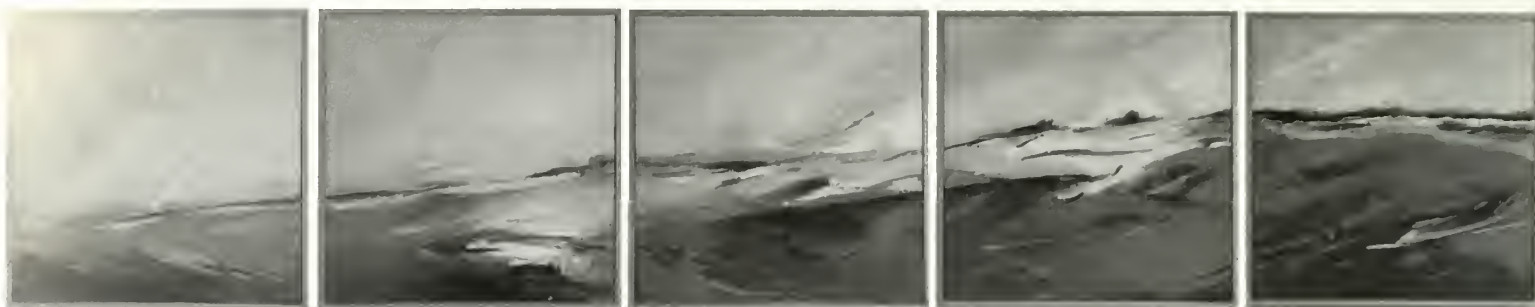
Scott's work is groundbreaking and, for novice or expert, the text is refreshingly digestible. She enumerates Webster's encounters and influences, composing a complex picture of the give-and-take that occurred between European and American artists in the first half of the twentieth century. The book also provides the most comprehensive survey of Webster's work available. "A few more works have come out of the woodwork since the book was published," Scott remarks. By simply being able to review Webster's working life, we are given a new perspective and a new respect for his artistic legacy. Scott's analysis affords the reader an opportunity to go even deeper. Let's hope that more of Webster's work is discovered and appreciated. Scott's fine scholarship raises awareness of this important but neglected twentieth-century artist.

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E. AMBROSE WEBSTER, *BUILDING BLOCKS, BERMUDA*, c. 1916, OIL ON CANVAS, 30 BY 40 INCHES, COLLECTION OF THE KENNETH STUBBS FAMILY, COURTESY OF BABCOCK GALLERIES

TAYLOR M. POLITES is a freelance writer living and working in Provincetown. He has published in a variety of local and regional newspapers and magazines, and recently received a Master's in Creative Writing from Wilkes University.



HESSEVALLEY, 2008, OIL ON 5 CANVAS PANELS, 24 BY 120 INCHES, PRIVATE COLLECTION

Joerg Dressler's **NEW WORLD**

By Howard Karren

WHAT IS IT about Dvořák "New World" Symphony that always brings me to the verge of tears? It's romantic music, for sure, inspired by a European composer's trip to the Americas, where he encounters the boldness, the majesty, the freedom, and the exquisite natural beauty of a world unencumbered by centuries of European history. As the son of a Viennese World War II refugee, I have always felt like a bit of an alien in America, and that's perhaps why Dvořák's embrace of it evokes such powerful emotions. The Outer Cape, where my partner and I have recently settled, is my own version of a New World outpost. It has historically been a refuge for misfits, like the Pilgrims and Puritans, and in the twentieth century, artists, free-thinkers, and gay people. But it's as a place where Old and New Worlds find a hybrid home that this part of the Cape can reliably be called my own.

Nothing could have cemented that feeling more than the opening of the Alden Gallery in Provincetown, which my friend Stephen Syta and I launched in the fall of 2007. That's because the history of the Provincetown art colony is one of adapting European art movements to the American imagination. Charles Hawthorne and his followers brought Impressionism and other modern ways of seeing to these shores, and later, Hans Hofmann and the Abstract Expressionists who came here infused European Modernism with fresh energy. In that latter, postwar revolution, American artists, many of them foreign-born, became the international elite for the first time in history. At the Alden Gallery, we're doing our part to further that catalytic blending of cultures by presenting the work of Joerg Dressler, one of the best of a new generation of Provincetown painters, who just happens to have come here from Europe.

Dressler was born in Hanau, Germany, and acquired an art education steeped in the European tradition, receiving his master's degree from the Hochschule für Gestaltung in Offenbach, Germany, and then studying at the prestigious École Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Paris. In 1996, he moved to Boston; he works there now as a creative director at a graphic design firm, and on weekends throughout the year he comes to Provincetown and paints in his West End studio

(Joerg and Stephen, my gallery co-owner, are a couple). Back in Germany, he was an admirer of the bold, bright colors of the "Junge Wilde" ("wild youth") painters of the seventies and eighties such as Rainer Fetting, Bernd Zimmer, and Salomé. But Dressler's personal style has evolved over the years and is not that easily categorized. And certainly his new home on this tenuous, sandy spit of land jutting out into the Atlantic has had a profound effect on him as well.

"The line between abstraction and representation is where my interest lies," he says. "Depending on my needs or moods, the level of abstraction and the intensity of color and light may change." He does not paint in plein air or from photographs, but rather from "mental snapshots" of the world around him. "My paintings are interpretations of my surroundings—past and present," he says. Dressler has a way of straddling dichotomies—abstract and representational, past and present, and, I would add, European and American.

His solo show at the Alden last year is a case in point. He told me that the works were inspired by a trip he had made back to Germany; he wanted to capture the colors of the countryside he had visited. But since he paints from memory in Provincetown, elements of Cape light and landscape inevitably found their way onto the canvas. The most ambitious work in the show, a five-panel, ten-foot-long panorama called *Hessevalley*, can easily be interpreted as a representation of Provincetown dunes and not of the German topography of its title. The vivid greens and blacks of the lush Hessian flora are there, but so are the sandy browns and pastel blues of the Provincelands. Dressler is certainly aware of this and not displeased, although it isn't necessarily what he set out to accomplish. But I suspect he realizes that this amalgam of landscapes, of cultures, of New and Old Worlds, makes his work uniquely his.

Some of the paintings that Dressler has completed for his show at the Alden this August are also derived from his memories of recent trips to Europe, and just as before, the paintings are really landscapes of

his imagination. That is true of everything that he paints, even when the ostensible subject is actually a location on Cape Cod. And that is true of the Provincetown artistic tradition, which is less about the boats and seascapes and fishermen that are so prevalent on its canvases than it is about seeing things in a new way, one that may well encompass the experience gained from foreign lands.

One of the challenges of Dressler's art that he most savors is "recognizing the moment when a painting is done," he says. "The inner feeling of satisfaction and personal gratification that a painting creates is what drives me. First, I paint for myself; however, I hope that the viewer is presented with a painting that evokes a narrative that allows them to feel a similar feeling of gratification." Most of the buyers of Dressler's work have been American—even ur-American, from Texas—and his last show virtually sold out. Clearly, they have found that parallel gratification. For me, the key is the "narrative" Dressler speaks of, which many of us interpret as a story about what's represented in the painting, such as a piece of vegetation on a sandy hill—Whose point of view is this? Who owns this land? What is happening here? My narrative is more about the creative process—a journey to a new home. In Provincetown and in my gallery, with his paintings on the wall, I have arrived.

HOWARD KARREN is a freelance writer and editor, and co-owner of the Alden Gallery in Provincetown.



ABOVE: JOERG DRESSLER IN HIS STUDIO IN PROVINCETOWN, APRIL 2009

Cape Personalities

KRISTINA BIRD AND PAINTING RESTORATION

By Taylor M. Polites

WHEN ARTIST Nancy Ellen Craig's Truro house burned down in March 2008, not only did she lose her home and possessions, but much of her artwork was lost or damaged as well. Paintings were water-soaked and smoke-stained, and quickly succumbed to mold and rot. When Craig found the resources to restore her work, she called her friend Dan L'Engle Davis for his advice on a restorer. Davis referred Craig to Kristina Bird.

From a studio nestled in the Truro pines, Bird has been restoring the Outer Cape's artwork for over fifteen years. "I used to drive to Boston and Newport to pick up paintings. Back then, I worked on one painting at a time," she recalls. Today, Bird receives calls from Boston, New York, and beyond. Instead of working alone in her dining room, Bird is one member of a three-person team. Rosa Plummer, a graphic artist and painter, joined Bird over ten years ago, and Cape artist Eve Aspinwall became the third almost two years ago. Bird's studio is lined with paintings, abstracts, portraits, marine paintings, American primitives, all in need of help. Large windows line two corners where easels can capture the Outer Cape's famed light. A large canvas of Craig's leans against a wall, black and gold with an elephant on its hind legs in the background.

"The paintings were so damaged," Craig says. "They had to be cleaned. One was rotted at the bottom and they had to put a whole new canvas on it and paint in about an inch." Plummer worked on several of Craig's paintings. "I cleaned [portraits of] Anjelica Huston and Frank Lloyd Wright," she recalls. "It's amazing work. I striplined the edges to make them strong and restretched the canvases to make them taut again. Nancy and Kristina got along really well."

"She's done a truly wonderful job," Craig says. "You can't even see where the damage was. And we've become good friends. She's a warm and generous-spirited person." Craig sometimes stops by the studio for lunch. Each working day, Bird's team stops to share a meal and they welcome guests. Beyond repairing canvases, they have built many friendships in the Outer Cape arts community.

Bird attributes the hospitality and warmth of her studio to her time studying in Italy. She appreciated the work/life balance in Europe, where even small experiences are savored. And she got a first-rate education: "I graduated college with a degree in foreign relations, went to Italy to learn Italian, and ended up studying art restoration." Bird studied at the Istituto per l'Arte et il Restauro in Florence, studying art history, theory of restoration,

chemistry, photography, drawing, and painting. Fabulous work from churches and private owners were available to the students since the school offered to restore them at no charge.

After graduating, Bird worked on sixteenth-century painted bas-reliefs in the Palazzo Quirinale (Presidential Palace) in Rome and the frescoes of Santa Chiara in Naples. She cleaned and restored Roman statue fragments in Spoleto, Italy, as well as bronze statues in Boston with Har-

vard's Fogg Art Museum. She studied gilding with Nils Johnson at the Eliot School and apprenticed with Polly Blackett in London and Peter Williams in Boston. During her apprenticeship with Blackett, she worked on the restoration of a twenty-five-foot Tiepolo ceiling panel and murals at the Lloyd's of London Building.

She has worked closely with Provincetown's Art Commission, the Provincetown Art Association and Museum, and the Pilgrim Monument and Provincetown Museum, to name just a few clients. "From the time that she picked up a painting at my gallery on her bicycle, it was an instant connec-



KRISTINA BIRD IN HER STUDIO PHOTO BY EILEEN COUNIHAN



LEFT TO RIGHT: PORTRAIT OF A LADY, BEFORE IT WAS WORKED ON; AFTER IT HAS BEEN CLEANED, CONSOLIDATED, KEYED-OUT AND FILLED; THE PAINTING AFTER IT HAS BEEN IN-PAINTED AND VARNISHED. PHOTOS BY EILEEN COUNIHAN



(LEFT TO RIGHT) KRISTINA BIRD, ROSA PLUMMER, AND EVE ASPINWALL. PHOTO BY EILEEN O'NEILL

tion," remembers Jim Bakker, executive director of the Pilgrim Monument and Provincetown Museum. "You just feel comfortable with something in her hands."

"There's an ease working with the whole group," says Stephen Borkowski, current chair of the Provincetown Art Commission. "I have a modest budget and it has been to the town's great benefit to get a wonderful product for a very good price. And I'm always amazed with the range of conditions she can deal with. They really make the effort to educate you so that you can make informed decisions. She's in a position of trust."

In the early '90s, Dan L'Engle Davis received a different phone call from Nancy Ellen Craig. The portraitist was renting a studio from Davis and a kerosene pipe was leaking. He came over and went into a back closet, climbed a ladder, turned on a flashlight. Instead of a leak, however, he found a roll of sixteen oil paintings by the artists William and Lucy L'Engle, Davis's grandparents. They had been hidden away for years in what was Lucy's studio before Craig began painting there. The unstretched canvases had sustained damage from the extremes of Cape Cod temperatures, the humidity, the salty air, and, worst of all, mice. "The mice that ate those paintings must have had a serious lead diet," Davis remembers. When he had saved the money to restore them, he turned to Kristina Bird.

"Kristina and Rosa did the most fantastic job. The paintings look like new. She brought them back to life," Davis exclaims. "She really has saved the day for a lot of us out here on the Cape."

Bird's connection to Cape Cod goes back to her youth. During her time in London, Bird often thought of her summers on Cape Cod growing up and her mother's house situated on a ridge with views to the bay and Provincetown harbor. "In England, I got homesick for Cape Cod. I missed it." When her apprenticeship was completed, she moved to Truro.

Being located next door to the oldest art colony in America has been good for business. "This is a great little hot spot," Bird notes. Her studio has worked on paintings from the 1700s to the present, from unknown artists to L'Engle to Copley, and from portraits to abstracts. "What I love here are the marine paintings, but I also love portraits. Though I would say I don't have a favorite. Different paintings represent different challenges."

"There are four steps that we do. Cleaning, consolidation, aesthetic restoration, and protection," Bird says. While paintings may mostly be described as oil on canvas, the reality is much more complicated. A raw piece of linen canvas is stretched over a wood frame called a stretcher and tacked in place. A coat of sizing (historically animal skin glue of some kind) is put on, followed by gesso (a gypsum composite) to seal the canvas. The primed layer, called the ground, is what the paint actually adheres to. If unprimed canvas is painted (and many artists have done so), it can lead to the deterioration of the canvas material itself. After the artist finishes the painting, it must dry for at least six months before it is coated with a varnish for protection. Over time, each layer can be corrupted and it is the job of Bird and her team to identify and mitigate any weaknesses. Some of the works that arrive in the studio are painted on surfaces that were not properly prepared, a problem the team sees with more recent works. "[Art] conservation is something that should be taught in art school," remarks Aspinwall. "In the 1970s in art school, we weren't concerned with anything academic. I never realized I wasn't providing a stable ground for my paintings."

Plummer can use a variety of solvents, detergents, or emulsions to remove the varnish layer that may have accumulated dust, dirt, smoke, and discoloration over time. "Cleaning a filthy painting is the best feeling," Plummer enthuses. "It's like cleaning a window and everything is three-dimen-

sional again. The amount of pollution in the front of a painting is like not cleaning a window for a hundred years." Plummer explains how the dirt and old varnish can yellow a painting, turning blues to green. "You discover details, signatures, the white becomes pure again. All the true colors the painter intended."

Plummer also does a lot of the hands-on physical work. "More paintings are just cleaning jobs," Plummer explains. "But for about 50 percent of them, there is some inadequacy in the canvas itself. It's bumpy because there are no keys. With heat and cold, the canvas breathes and gets bigger and smaller and so the canvas cannot hang on to the paint. Sometimes there are little accidents with really old paintings, like a tear." If there is a small tear, Plummer can reweave the canvas from the back using linen threads in a crisscrossing pattern, a technique Bird picked up from the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Bird prefers this method, because patches often become visible to the eye over time, like a "Band-Aid."

If the stretcher is bad, Plummer removes the canvas and restretches it on a new frame. If there is decay or rot on the tacking edge, she can attach new canvas in strips to the worn edges, a process called striplining. In cases of extreme decay, the team can put an entirely new piece of canvas backing behind the original.

Paintings that require this kind of work generally require consolidation on the actual paint. "The worst thing is flaking," says Bird. "That is the art disappearing. Flying off the canvas." The team will infuse wax resin through the paint to restore the ground. It is a gentle and time-consuming process. The team will coat the canvas-side of a painting in the resin, then use a hot spatula to infuse it through the canvas layer. The wax resin slowly melts into the ground behind the oil paint, restoring the surface to which the paint attaches itself. Excess resin is removed from the back by soaking into brown paper with an iron and from the front with mineral spirits.

After the cleaning and consolidation are complete, Aspinwall and Bird will begin the aesthetic restoration or in-painting. In-painting, strictly speaking, is re-creating the original artwork where those gaps, cracks, or flaking have occurred. However, there is more to the technique than matching colors, a difficult enough task in itself. The surface must be properly prepared.

An oil landscape painted on a board came to the team because the board had split in two. The team mounted the piece on a new board backing and Bird filled in the seam with gesso, carefully matching the texture of the seam to the original. "It will have to be perfect," Bird explains. "I'll work at the fill until it is seamless." Once the surface is even with the painting and the texture is matched, Bird and Aspinwall will match the colors. "If there is a thick impasto or a brushy oil treatment, you carve into the fill," Aspinwall explains. "The really difficult thing is getting the paint to match if it's a really smooth painting. It's amazing how your eye can pick up on that." The tradition in art restoration is to use varnish paints for in-painting, but years ago Bird was convinced by groundbreaking restoration expert Morton Bradley to use acrylics.

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Acrylics, Bird explains, do not discolor over time and, most importantly, are reversible. "Reversible is the most important word in our work," she insists. Virtually everything Bird and her team do in the studio is reversible, so as not to permanently alter a work of art and so that the work they have restored can benefit from future advances in technology.

The final phase of the process is a new coat of varnish to protect the artwork for the next hundred years, and then the team moves on to the next challenge. "I learn something new with each project," Aspinwall continues, "and I spend my day thinking about painting and the lives of artists. I observe how different artists think and use paint. In some cases, we study the work on a painting as long as the artists probably did."

"Taking care of art is sort of a thrill, isn't it?" Bird adds. "Nurturing art. The different people who collect art are fascinating. I love that."

TAYLOR M. POLITES is a freelance writer living and working in Provincetown. He has published in a variety of local and regional newspapers and magazines, and recently received a Master's in Creative Writing from Wilkes University.

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Jackie Lipton's LAVISH INTERIORS

By Eileen Myles

IT'S HARD to believe that the Whitney once had a program for street kids from 1968 to 1975. Officially it was named the Art Resources Center and unofficially it was Cherry Street, named after the street it was on. It's torn down now.

One of those buildings bought from the city for a buck but, like others designated for public use, when the thing that spawned them went away another deal took hold. I mention this when I look at and think about the paintings of Jackie Lipton—lavish interiors—because she was one of those kids herself: a self-described child of “poets and painters.” The plural's significant here, intentionally vague from a time when those genres were. Or the society itself got privileged over the genre. Jackie remained at Cherry Street for as long as the program did. She was a “peer studio artist” working with the other kids. Most of whom she now believes are dead. She had her first show at the Whitney Museum in 1974, when Laurie Anderson, then a recent product of the Whitney Program, was briefly directing the street kid program.

Jackie's fifty-nine, and once I had seen her work and thought and then wrote something I asked what she had in mind. “Something that wakes you up,” she said. “That shakes you. I mean something might *seem* central to a painting but the greater fact of my work is always simultaneity.” She's right. It's also “anticipatory.” I'm thinking of artists working in any medium when technology hadn't already crowded out the majority of ways of looking at the world. Yet the artist herself is managing to presage the world to come in a funky almost science club way. Like the technology may or may not yet exist but she's got the idea. She's stating the need. While constructing it on another plane. I'm thinking of Smithson's site non-site work or abstract painting as told by Jackie Lipton. The entire history of it. Somehow it feels like Web work. Without leaving the body behind.

On Wednesday I scooted to Brooklyn on the F to see her show. It's at Corinne Robbins on Atlantic Ave. Thirty-one paintings, mostly of medium dimensions—(16 X 20)—modest-sized I thought, though about a quarter of the paintings in the show are “body-sized”—(64 X 52)—and a couple even larger than that, then a slew of prints, mostly monochromatic—one a chain of moody diamonds in pale blue, and one of those diamonds is rouged up slightly, casting its red light on the rest. And another bunch . . . a wide color wash of ecstasy, a rave X.

But her paintings are the thing and they have enormous depth without being faintly morose. Jackie makes abstract paintings of all kinds—some seem kind of Fab ex, but with circles; there's some early modern, and even some Impressionism. Yet the show, a collection of six years' work, coheres.



WHIRLAWAY, 2009, OIL AND WAX ON CANVAS, 70 BY 56 INCHES

It feels like a vivid sampler, tiny visitations, abutting moves, from the entire history of abstract painting, a bunch of clicks.

I think of this show as mainly yellow (though it's many-colored) but yellow is certainly the predominant experience of the show. Advertising has proved that yellow is the color people love the most. Is it just the sun? A buoyant public energy informs her paintings though it comes from the inside out. One I'm looking at is from her *Breath to Breath* series. I really hate her titles. They're sort of touchy-feely and the work isn't. From the bottom of the price list I learn most titles are “courtesy of Patti Smith with her permission.” Oh well. Nobody ever claimed Patti is a vanguard poet. The painting I'm standing in front of is finger-painting-y. Tactile. Thick bars of painted light tug down the frame like an obstruction you're viewing a film through: a weighty scrim. Others pull across. The energy is bracing and vivid. The honest and scrappy action on the surface of the canvas implies an interior to the painting while not giving us much information about it. Other than that it feels pretty good in there. It feels like a stu-

dio where even more painting's taking place. You feel like you're being given a piece of the map, just a crop. Jackie's privy to the entire vision though she's painting just *this*.

Ghost Dance, which I found downstairs (take a left at a couple of fried eggs at the foot of the stairs—yeah it's a couple of fried eggs and furniture. Just a curl.) possessed a vaguer and more interesting squalor than Bonnard. I mean thinking of those rooms of his where a door is open and a woman is coming in but you hardly see her. Jackie gives you less. There is no woman in the room. There is maybe a spoon. A scoop shape. And again the feeling, a dull tingle. And its roundness fans out. You get it all in a bad video way, I mean the space, the lighting one is not *supposed* to like but helplessly we dwell in. This is not all presence but all depth—regaling in its own perceptual moment—when you're standing there in your greasy hands with a day's schedule. *These* are the art. Is it feminist work when there's no woman. When it's all schedule. An index of color and a map of time. You're her and everything there is. The work simply slows down, changes you. That seems immense.

Jackie's mentor was Paul Brach, the New York painter who died in 2007 but in his midlife headed west to ride horses and to design the pedagogical approach that informed Cal Arts, not a big painting school at all. He came back to New York. Jackie gleaned so much from Brach—both teaching and painting. She's spent her adult life teaching art to autistic kids for the Board of Ed and now works in the childhood and adolescent Psych ward at Bellevue. The city keeps defunding, deciding who doesn't need art anymore, but she manages to alight on the next right occasion. The painting I turned toward when I entered the show—a pouring abstract grey, a painting I felt I already knew, even owned; but no, this time there's a thing in it. Which for me is her great revelation. A car or a train, a box—something installed within the force of her painting. To have that external something in the painting, a sealed thing that says stop but means go.

The Arthur Dove-looking paintings in what I'd call the middle of her show were paintings full of bright round things, areas outlined—my science geek would call them vacuoles—yet I imagine them painted one by one. The assortment drawn quickly and then colored in. I'm not a painter. Piles of fruit, people, things, a landscapey cumulative effect, abundance. Seeing is accomplished

by using these portals of activity, this rudimentary lens, her circle, a web of concurrent choices. Her early moderns have a bright palette that lauds the juiciness of the endeavor of working and living. These are American paintings. In a very William Dean Howells kind of way. I get giddy thinking about how much they are *not* paintings of agony—while also being not *unaware* of suffering. Almost communal choices make these paintings cohere. Their openness, their transparency of structure. Their frankness about how the very obstructions to our intended path—the building's pulled down, the train's stuck, somebody died—that next thing, something abstract, whatever happens, is what keeps us in life. Horrifyingly true. And that's her strength here. Her view is trusty. This very young show by an older person. I love the fact of Jackie Lipton. The continuing newness of her game.

EILEEN MYLES is a poet (Sorry, Tree) who writes fiction (Chelsea Girls, Cool for You) and an art writer and journalist whose The Importance of Being Iceland, a collection of writings on art, culture, and queerness for which she received a Warhol/Creative Capital grant, will be out in July from Semiotext(e)/MIT. She is Professor Emeritus of Writing & Literature at UC San Diego. She lives in New York.



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Carl Andre and Donald Judd

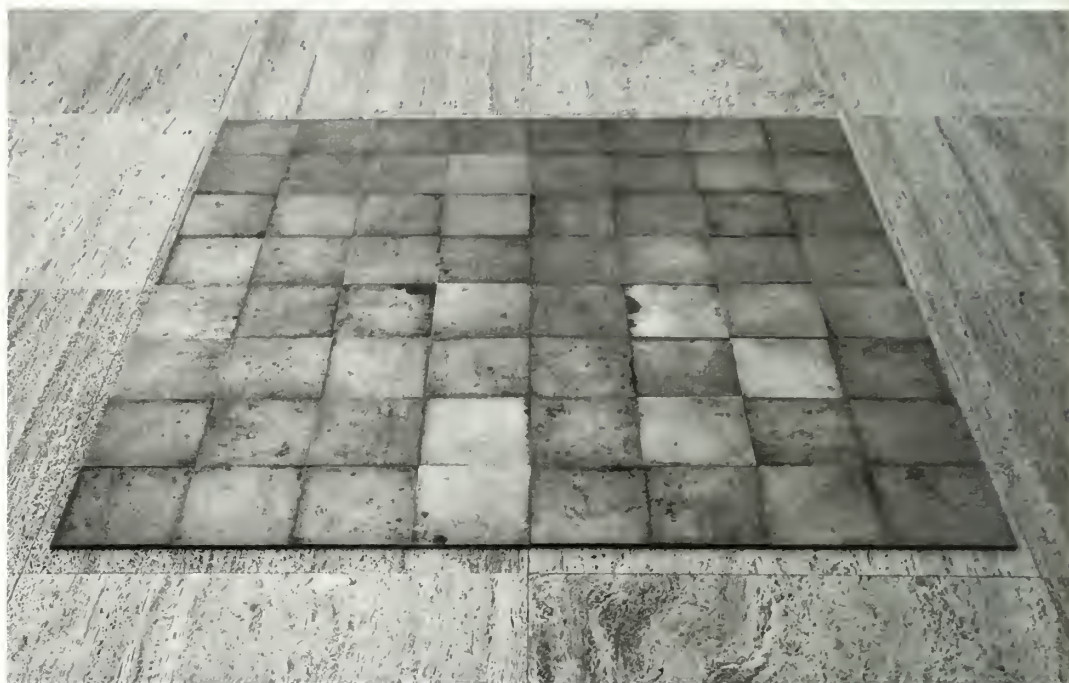
IN ANDRE'S STUDIO

JULY 11, 1970

By Marc Straus

This poem was written for an event at the Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art in Peekskill, New York, in which poets offered a response to a work of art in the exhibit "Origins." I own this work and it is among the objects that engenders the worst of questions—why is it art? Looking back, I am surprised that Andre had a Guggenheim retrospective when he was only thirty-five. That was a great risk for both the museum and him, especially since his work remains challenging and enigmatic almost forty years later.

—M.S.



CARL ANDRE, 64 ALUMINUM SQUARES, 1969, ALUMINUM, 64H BY 64W BY 0.375D INCHES

64 Aluminum Squares, 1969

CARL ANDRE:

When I first made my first twelve-inch copper plates last year, I admit now I was thinking of Rothko, those magisterial canvases of magenta and red, and

I wanted to genuflect in a Jew's studio: the silence of the paintings was almost unbearable, and I told Mark that until these works only Titian and Botticelli

had license to such red, and then on February 25th—it is impossible to forget—he lay in a bathtub of blood, the porcelain saturated with crimson,

as though he was saying, that's it, there is no more to do, and then last week Barney died, and I have this exhibit in two months at the Guggenheim

and it is hopeless because Newman never compromised, not that son-of-a-bitch who painted those stations over ten years that will breathe for hundreds more,

and me, I have a stack of bricks, ('66), my copper squares, lead squares, aluminum, and just now I know I am a charlatan, a sycophant, a fucking break man

on the railroad for four years, an idiot from Quincy, Mass. of all places, who is presumptuous enough to have quoted Brancusi and even Henry Moore, but

you know what—and I may be drunk as hell and if you ever repeat this I will say you kissed up to Clement Greenberg, and that is about as evil

as anything I can think of—my favorite work is my aluminum plates, the 64 eight-inch squares sitting over there, and they are nothing without Rothko

and Newman, and what Waldmann will write for the Guggenheim catalog is that the work is part of a new American post-modernism—Judd

and Flavin, not to slight you Donald, but she will say that Flavin was first, his '64 fluorescents, the Tatlins, his homage to you, and I was second, and your stacks

were last, which are ironically, aluminum, at least most of them, and though you deny it, have you ever thought that they are really pictures as well, thick canvases

on the wall, and as much as you may say that Beuys is a fascist, let's face it, he lined up objects like salami slices before you or I even dreamed of aluminum objects,

which in my case is admittedly more about the material than the fabrication, more about a reflection of our humanness, our earth, our natural elements, the gravity

that keeps our feet to the ground, without embellishment, without Plexiglas which you have added to those stacks, which doesn't mean that I don't like them, which I do

very much, it's your constant need for perfection, for every angle and joint to be perfect, everything is perfect, and me, I just wanted a bunch of aluminum plates, store bought,

store cut, maybe 3/8 inch thick, with any imperfection that may be intrinsic to the aluminum, and then we line them up in any order as long as they form a square, and

then you know what, I don't give a shit if they walk on it, in fact I would prefer that they do because then my 64 squares come between humans and the ground they walk on, to

step on my canvas if you will, and yes, there is some Beuys here and some Duchamp, but look, Marcel didn't mean for anyone to use his shovel, to use his bicycle wheel, and as

much as he deobjectified the object, the clever bastard always foresaw its museum context, its preciousness, and I think that art really is more than thinking it is art, it is a connection

at its best between the molecules of being human and the molecules of the earth that makes our living possible: sand, aluminum, lead, copper—and if not for gravity then we wouldn't have bones,

we would hover without form, and I am not certain then how humans make love, how they eat and regurgitate and begin over, how they will understand art unless they understand

it is in their cells, in the frigging dirt under their feet, and when they look down at the aluminum the sky and the lights are reflective, exactly because this has nothing to do with

mirrors, this is about collecting tickets on the train, this is about walking along Broadway, going in and out of each shop on Canal, the linen stores on Grand, peering into the pastry shops

on Mott, and you know what—at the Guggenheim they will cordon off my aluminum, a guard with epaulets won't let children near and they will grow up thinking that art

is the pastry paintings and doilies in the Met, that art is about people with talent who paint with brushes, landscapes and still lifes and they will never know that the kickstand

on their Schwinn is elegant, their grandmother's kneecap, the arc of Koufax's throw to home plate, which is why I made these fucking things—64 aluminum squares.

DONALD JUDD:

Just six weeks ago Eva Hesse died, May 29th to be precise, and it is she that I constantly bicker with, not Rothko or Newman; Eva, only thirty-four,

(brain tumor, for God sakes), and that twenty-eight year-old, Bruce Nauman—both of them—latex, cement, rope, rubber, fiberglass—discord, finger-

prints, footprints—they are everywhere in their art, and I am removing myself as far as possible—not a mark, not a finger scratch on my new progression,

and to be perfectly truthful I don't think it's Barney either, or even Rothko that you struggle against, I think it's Warhol—your 64 aluminum squares in opposition to his 64

Jackies, the Marilyns, postage stamps, soup cans, all so orderly and squared off, especially the grey ones, the grey Elvises, and all you did was rant and rave

when we first saw them at Leo's in '62, and you and Flavin were stone drunk as usual threatening to draw mustaches on the Marilyns like Duchamp did to a Mona Lisa drawing,

(I had to remind you), and thank goodness for Bob Rauschenberg, who slapped you hard on the back and said take it back to your studio kid, kick the shit out of these, make these Marilyns

disappear, and that my friend is what this aluminum work is, the negation of the 64 Warhol images, the Marilyns and Jackies flat on their backs, gone, exactly where they belong,

and today I can tell you that it was a truly lucky turn of events, and really lucky that we had forgotten at the time that Bob Rauschenberg had destroyed a Duchamp.

CARL ANDRE:

We are at war: 10 boxes, 64 squares, it doesn't matter really whose head we piss on, as long as they are crushed beneath our feet—Beuys, Newman, Warhol, Rothko, and

in my case, all carefully hidden under aluminum plates, stepped on, a memory trace at best, and let's face it, it's always been this way, Picasso standing on Cézanne's

head, Henry Moore on Arp, Rothko on the Fauves—and if I am lucky a whole lot of shitheads not yet in those prissy art schools will try to piss on me.

MARC STRAUS is a doctor and a poet. He has three collections of poetry from *TriQuarterly Books*: *One Word* (1994), *Symmetry* (2000), and *Not God* (2006). His poems have appeared in the *Kenyon Review*, *FIELD*, and *Ploughshares*. He has written widely on contemporary art and reviews each *Whitney Biennial* for Provincetown Arts.

The Art of Handling a Storm

monotypes by **VICKY TOMAYKO** texts by **JOANNE BARKAN**



The Art of Handling a Storm

Sawily grabbing,
try for the eye.
Both hands on the wind at all times.
Do not wring, twist, or use harsh deterrents.
Caress into submission.
Weather to surrender in full color.



Weathering

They say:
Go with the flow.
What do they know?
I blow in the wind.
I brave the elements.
I weather the weather.
I burnish my patina.



Migratory Woes

With heavy snows,
paths that froze,
frostbit toes,
as these things go,
it could have been worse.

As It Is

As it is is worse than as it was,
as you can see.
As it might be might be better.



The World Loves Me

Woe knows
the rose
stays in the picture.



Madonna

Our Lady of Swimmers and
Creatures with Fins
appears unannounced where
misfortune begins.
She comforts young girls who
have nebulous pain.
They trust her true poise and
her mean Mary Jane.

Salt Marsh, Truro

We fear for our friend who's become quite destructive.
The cause must be learned so our help is productive.
Sunstroke, marsh fever, or too much salt air?
Amorphous malaise or acute mal-de-mer?
A case for strong drugs or alternative care?
At least we agree it's an all-marsh affair.



Eve's Wood

They call it The Fall. Do I share that opinion?
The garden is gone, but I've got my dominion.
Mysterious woods where all apples are mine,
and Adam comes 'round only when I'm inclined.



Moonlit Night

Their parachutes bob and descend like silk flowers.
They put up a tent. Are they planning a tower?
Promoters of peace or new lords of our fate?
We're small and unarmed, so we watch and we wait.

Autumnal Equinox (Hunting)

Day and night equal, in transient balance,
stresses my nerves and creates psychic challenge.
I sense persecution. My thinking grows stunted.
At times I don't know if I'm hunting or hunted.



This ongoing collaboration began in March 2008. The process is simple: when Vicky Tomayko finishes a print, she sends Joanne Barkan a digital image and the piece's title. Barkan writes with the image and her evolving text side by side on the computer screen. The title plays an important part in Barkan's thinking, but she has no other information about Tomayko's meaning. When she thinks a text is finished, Barkan e-mails it to Tomayko to find out if it works for her. So far it always has.

The monotypes reproduced here are 22 by 30 inches, 2008–2009.

VICKY TOMAYKO is an artist, teacher, and former Fellow of the Fine Arts Work Center. She uses thin layers of transparent color to create one-of-a-kind prints. Her work—at once narrative, humorous, and edgy—can be seen at the Schoolhouse Gallery in Provincetown.

JOANNE BARKAN is a political essayist, member of the editorial board of Dissent magazine, and author of Visions of Emancipation: The Italian Workers' Movement Since 1945. She has also written over 120 books—in verse and prose—for young readers.

Tomayko and Barkan have been friends for thirty years and live next door to each other in South Truro.



By Suzanne McConnell

FOR ALMOST THIRTY YEARS, my husband, Gary Kuehn, and I have rented a cottage on Slough Pond, Wellfleet. And every year for the last fifteen years or so, about July 5, Mike Macdonald threw a cocktail party. We can look across the pond and see the Macdonald cottage, veiled by locust and pine, one of several army surplus prefab houses that Jack Phillips bought in the 1940s and moved to locations in the woods around Slough and Horseleech Ponds. Soon after arriving from New York for the summer, we anticipated hearing Mike's deep resonant voice on the phone, inviting us to come about six o'clock. It was the first party of the season. And it was the best. Many people hadn't seen each other since the previous summer. Everyone was fresh. They exchanged their most important news.

Mike invited people he had known as a child—older people who were friends of his parents, Dwight and Nancy Macdonald, and his contemporaries who grew up coming every summer to the Wellfleet Woods as he did—along with more recent friends and neighbors on the surrounding ponds. One table was set up with liquor, the kitchen counter with cheese and crackers. People crowded on the deck, which opened toward the water. It was an invigorating mix: generations of writers, artists, scholars, and political activists. Mike was in his element.

Mike died in the spring of 2008 of a heart attack, following a year-long battle with kidney failure and prostate cancer. His brother, Nick, threw a cocktail party as a memorial. On a side table, photographs, memorabilia, and poems were displayed. Many of us knew Mike was writing a memoir of his childhood, but we didn't know he wrote poems. At a certain moment Nick called us together, and he played a Bach prelude on the piano while Florence Phillips accompanied him on flute. Then he and many others spoke, remembering Mike. Someone read aloud one of the poems she had just discovered. Like the others, it took place in Wellfleet during Mike's childhood. We toasted him and gave him a send-off—one more memorable party—that he would have loved.

The embrace of childhood was both Mike's doing and undoing, for more than most of us, he never seemed to succeed in growing beyond the hold of it. And some childhood it was.

Born into old, prominent New England families, Dwight and Nancy Macdonald were part of the left-wing circle on the Outer Cape in the forties, depicted in Mary McCarthy's *A Charmed Life*. In 1953 Nancy founded Spanish Refugee Aid to assist the non-Communist exiles, retiring in 1983. Dwight Macdonald was a founding editor of *Partisan Review*, and the founder of *Politics*. He lectured, authored several books on politics and culture, wrote for the *New Yorker*, the *Nation*, the *New York Review of Books*, the *New York Times*, and was a film critic for *Esquire*.

But to firstborn son Michael, his father was "the tireless impresario of my young delights." Mike compared him to the character Dick Diver in *Tender Is the Night*, the "organizer of a private gaiety, creator of a richly encrusted happiness." Dwight conjured up one communal activity after another and, in keeping with his egalitarian politics, called them "co-operative."

"But while adults dominated these events," Mike wrote, "my father always began them for me and my friends."

Reuel Wilson, Charlie Jencks, and Mike were inseparable as little boys. "I found Dwight to be the most stimulating adult I knew," Reuel writes in his memoir *To the Life of the Silver Harbor*, reviewed in this issue. Charles Jencks remembers him as "a friend to children." Dwight could be very impatient with adults, and fierce about his ideas. But "Dwight really liked children," Hayden Herrera told me. "There was a wonderful movie house in Wellfleet and he'd gather up all the children and take us to the movies. He knew the girl who sold tickets, and he'd get movie posters for all of us."

"My father's supreme co-operation was the softball game," Mike Macdonald wrote. Played in a sandy lot by the high school, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., covered first base, Bernard Rosenberg pitched, cousins

Norman Mailer and Cyrus Rembar played shortstop, Ed O'Connor covered left field, and Dwight, sometimes brandishing a cigarette holder, right field. Everyone in the backwoods community played, children and women included. Cy and Ed O'Connor were the only athletes, and "hit a home run every time at bat." Reuel Wilson told me Mike's favorite story was of Mailer breaking a leg, sliding into a base.

"If Edmund Wilson was the reclusive intellectual idol of my Wellfleet summers," Mike wrote, "Paul Magriel was my connoisseur for life itself." An art collector, dancer, archivist, and writer about art and ballet, Magriel had a "splendid physique," was an "isometrics pioneer," and owned an "amazing collection of antique baseball cards from the early 1900s." He introduced Mike to documentary film, kayaking, and his first great hamburger. When Mike was twelve, Magriel appeared at his school at noontime, and "whisked him off to the World Series."

But then, as Mike recalls in his memoir, "a problem common to our backwoods bohemia ended the Magriels' marriage, as it would my parents' marriage later on: adultery. Shuttling between wife and girlfriend, Paul had only to negotiate fifty yards of sand and saw grass in an affair so open that even we kids knew about it. By 1950, adultery and nudity were familiar in the Wellfleet woods. The nude parties were traumatic for me, their memory repressed during the promiscuities that only ended in my late thirties, as I finally began to grow up. Here in Wellfleet was an early warning of the damage done to some children of the sixties counterculture."

Hayden Herrera felt angry at the adults' nudity. "It was alienating. A child can't be close to a naked person." Penny Jencks expressed the size disparity and bewilderment sensed by a child surrounded by huge naked bodies, disrobing, lounging on the beach, in her sculptures of such figures, exhibited in 2007 at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum. The Macdonalds, Reuel Wilson writes, had few bourgeois "rules or boundaries for their children." Hayden says, "Our parents as a group were narcissistic and inattentive. We were all fed a lot of peanut butter."

As teenagers, Mike, Reuel, Charlie, and Hayden's older sister Blair would sometimes let Hayden tag along. Mike was the kindest to her and the most present. "I never lost that feeling that he was older and smarter." She was at Radcliffe when Mike was at Harvard. "He was fabulous, sophisticated, and attractive then. He majored in art history, and he told me I should major in art history, so I did." She went on to write the acclaimed biography *Frida*.

Mike never graduated. A brilliant fine art student, he came one or two classes short, blowing off a crucial final exam by arriving an hour late. He was "programmed to fail," Reuel says.

In the years I knew Michael on Cape Cod, beginning in the late eighties, he appeared like a failure. He was overweight, unkempt. He was alone. He sometimes inappropriately ogled younger women on the beach. He trudged, huffing his way along the path, on the way to the dunes, everyone passing him by. Because he didn't drive—like his idol Edmund Wilson—he seemed dependent, somewhat helpless. He clerked in bookstores.

In Hollywood in the early sixties, Michael reviewed properties for Otto Preminger, acted a one-line part confronting Henry Fonda in *The Best Man* (and was so nervous doing it, his brother, Nick, says, that they had to dub in his voice), and in one odd job, located asymmetrical spiderwebs for opening shots of *Lilith*, starring Warren Beatty and Jean Seberg. Peter Brooks hired him as casting director to find child actors for *Lord of the Flies*, and he went on location in Vieques.

In the late sixties he had a fairly regular column in the *Village Voice*, worked on political campaigns for Herman Badillo, Bella Abzug, and

Allard Lowenstein, and was much on the literary scene, attending George Plimpton's *Paris Review* parties and other literary events. He also went to therapy intensely, and suffered from near-breakdowns. In the seventies he was smitten with a young, beautiful Swedish blonde woman from Mexico; he spoke to others of their possible engagement, but they broke up and she returned to Mexico. He hung out at the Lion's Head in the Village, a watering hole for writers and journalists, and wrote an op-ed piece with Herman Badillo for the *Times*. He was well-known, respected, and liked. In the eighties he wrote *American Cities: A Report on the Myth of the Urban Renaissance* (Simon and Schuster, 1984).

"He sabotaged himself in many ways throughout his life," Reuel says. He couldn't work with anyone else. The *New York Times* asked him to write a piece, but he went off the given topic; Koch gave Mike a job and an office, and he was a producer at Channel 13 for a while, but neither lasted long. He had his own egocentric ideas, and he was outspoken. "Even as an employee at the Gorham Book Mart—his position for the last several years—he was relegated to the cellar, where he simply did his own reading a lot of the time."

But he was a fanatically hard worker. He'd stay up all night writing. His brother, Nick, discovered "a staggering amount of typed pages" when cleaning out his apartment. He also had an incredible memory. In recent years he wrote for the *New York Observer* and was trying to get a manuscript published about America's socioeconomic problems. The *New York Review* said they might publish a chapter. Even in the hospital, Mike was asking whether they had contacted him.

One friend told me, "My most vivid memory of Mike is walking behind him and Danny Kaiser (a Professor of Literature at Sarah Lawrence College) on the way to the beach, overhearing them having a trivial pursuit game over Trollope. It was remarkable; they were arguing over minutiae, and highly involved in it."

"Mike would try to trip me up on Henry James," Danny says. "He asked me, for example, 'Where was Maiden Merle born?' She was elegant, seemingly well-bred. But I answered correctly, 'The Brooklyn Navy Yard.' We argued about whether one of Trollope's recycled characters, Madam Mack, was Jewish or not. We each gave evidence from various novels. I found out we were both right. In some novels it's obvious that she's Jewish, and in others, it's clear she's not."

One of Michael's poems ends with the regret that no one will recall or carry on his father's cooperative ventures. But the National Seashore has preserved the backwoods of Wellfleet; the ponds and ocean shape interaction, and lend themselves to that spirit. For the last two summers, another generation of parents—newcomers to Wellfleet—engineered weekly beach picnics that were superlatively communal, with a bonfire, guitars, oodles of children, and gourmet food everyone cooked and shared. The softball game that Dwight Macdonald started continued for over fifty years, ending in the early part of this decade; but another, though not so cooperative, goes on. Some equivalent is germinating right now, surely, in the mind of some young parent.

I think of the poem Mike wrote for his five-year-old neighbor, about his friends ferrying him back and forth to Wellfleet, of how much he enjoyed hosting his annual cocktail party, and I wonder about the criteria for measuring success and failure. Helen Wilson says, "I remember his consistent kindness over the years to me." A dozen years ago she ran into him at a function in the Village, and they were talking about volunteerism. He told her that he was a bone marrow donor. It's painful to do. He'd initiated the donorship, and it had saved somebody's life.

Twice nominated for Pushcart Prizes, SUZANNE McCONNELL's stories have appeared widely in literary journals. She has an MFA from the Iowa Writers' Workshop, teaches at Hunter College, and is Fiction Editor for *Bellevue Literary Review*. An excerpt from her first novel, *Fence of Earth*, won Second Prize in *So to Speak's* Fiction Contest in 2008.

FACING PAGE: MIKE MACDONALD AT THIRD BASE, READING *THE NEW YORK TIMES*, JULY 1969. THE "CO-OPERATIVE" COMMUNITY SOFTBALL GAME WAS INITIATED BY DWIGHT MACDONALD IN THE 1940S IN WELLFLEET, AND CONTINUED UNTIL ABOUT 2003. PHOTO BY GLORIA NARDIN

“A Permanent Enrichment”

AN INTERVIEW WITH MARY OLIVER

By Oona Patrick



MARY OLIVER WITH PERCY PHOTO ©2005 RACHEL GIESE BROWN

PROVINCETOWN is blessed with two linked national treasures: the Provincelands and their best interpreter, the poet Mary Oliver. Oliver and Provincetown are intertwined to an unusual degree—the landscapes, plants, animals, and people here have long been inspiration for her, and are the subjects of many of her best-known works. She’s lived here for forty years, becoming a fixture of the community long before she became so well-known. But Provincetown has a curious way of making national figures out of friendly neighbors, and sometimes vice versa. This particular neighbor has won both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award, and today she is often described as the best-selling poet in the country. At her benefit reading for the Provincetown Public Library last October, applause, cheers, and whistles broke out as soon as she walked to the podium—an unlikely rock star in a simple white blouse.

Oliver is astonishingly prolific and over the past decade has often published more than a book a year. These recent works include *Winter Hours: Prose, Prose Poems, and Poems* (1999), *The Leaf and the Cloud* (2000), *What Do We Know: Poems and Prose Poems* (2002), *Owls and Other Fantasies: Poems and Essays* (2003), *Why I Wake Early: New Poems* (2004), *Blue Iris: Poems and Essays* (2004), *Long Life: Essays and Other Writings* (2004), *New and Selected Poems, Volume Two* (2005), *Thirst: Poems* (2006), and *Our World* (2007), an intriguing book of prose accompanying photographs by Oliver's late partner, Molly Malone Cook, who died in 2005. This year and last year she published *Red Bird* (2008), *The Truro Bear and Other Adventures: Poems and Essays* (2008), and *Evidence* (2009). In May 2009 eight of her books took their place among the top thirty best-selling poetry books in the United States.

Oliver is a poet of Provincetown's quiet, off-season side, that sometimes hidden version of the town, and she challenges us to attend to it as well as she does, to be open to experiences like the one she captures in the poem "At Blackwater Pond":

At Blackwater Pond the tossed waters have settled
after a night of rain.
I dip my cupped hands. I drink
a long time. It tastes
like stone, leaves, fire. It falls cold
into my body, waking the bones. I hear them
deep inside me, whispering
oh what is that beautiful thing
that just happened?

Oliver's lines about the Provincetown landscape, accessible and yet often calling readers to encounter pain, grief, and death, live in the minds of readers all over the country. As she writes in the notes to her 2006 audio collection, also called *At Blackwater Pond*, it is "As if the poem itself had an independent life, or the endless possibility of its own life,

in minds other than the poet's, which I think it has." By extension, it seems certain that the town as it is today, our shared world, will live on in the poems of Mary Oliver.

On a personal level, it may or may not be strange that I have not been able to take pleasure in much of our local nature-themed writing, despite having grown up in a town that has become so famous for its setting. The hint of an agenda, or of disdain for those who actually live and work in the landscape, often ruins it for me. But I can say that I have never once had this feeling when reading Oliver's work, poetry, or prose. Maybe it's the way she brings the reader into her perspective, as Mark Doty explained so well in his 1995 *Provincetown Arts* essay. But it's also, I think, her not needing to persuade us of anything. Oliver demonstrates this yet again in her new, pared-down but beautiful poems about yet another place—Mexico, where she spent much of this spring. The subjects of these poems—a woman dancing after work, a warbler in a tree, a mockingbird, and a pink rose, are not made to stand for some larger concept, and are not forced by the poet's art to become anything other than what they are.

There is one final thing that I feel I must mention, because I owe a debt to Mary Oliver. I count Oliver's introduction to Provincetown native Frank Gaspar's first book of poems, *The Holyoke*, among the things that made me feel that I could be a writer. She wrote: "Over the years there has been a lot of talk about what the 'creative' people have added to the town—opinions voiced mainly by the creative people themselves. Perhaps a sense of elitism is inevitable in such a situation, perhaps not. None of us was born here. And no one, if you get my meaning, ever considered the possibility of a Frank Gaspar. That I was engaged by his work has nothing to do with Provincetown but with the poems themselves, naturally. But this part of the story, I decided, was also worth the telling." Up until the day that I read that, sitting on the floor in the Provincetown Public Library, I had not truly considered "the possibility of a Frank Gaspar" myself. Oliver's long connection to this town has come with a deep understanding of its people as well, and for this I am forever grateful.

DOONA PATRICK: While we have Provincetown in common, I want to start with someplace else: Steepletop, Edna St. Vincent Millay's estate in Austerlitz, New York. You went there, you write in *Our World*, as a seventeen-year-old—drawn by Millay's poetry, I presume. I see similarities between her work and yours, and I think of you both in her line, "I am waylaid by Beauty." On the other hand, your personalities, at least as seen through your work, seem distinctly different. Do you still count her as an important influence on your work?

MARY OLIVER: While I was in high school, in Ohio, I was reading poetry, a lot of it (not much at the school), and Millay was one of the few contemporary poets whose work stirred me deeply. I don't mean the early work but the later, starting perhaps with *Buck in the Snow*; *Fatal Interview*; *Huntsman, What Quarry?*; and also her little known essay/letter *Fear* to the Governor of Massachusetts on behalf of Sacco and Vanzetti. In the spring of my senior year I wrote a note to her sister, Norma Millay, asking if I might visit the poet's home, and she replied "yes." So I set off, the morning after graduation. They (she and her husband, Charles Ellis, a painter) thought I might be a "retired Ohio schoolteacher"; they were not expecting such a youngster. The upshot was that Norma made me a sandwich, invited me to stay overnight, and our relationship grew richly enough that I ended up living there, more or less permanently, for six or seven years. Quite a mind-stretching experience for an Ohio girl, to live with literary, artistic people. In Ohio, I had a pretty lonely existence, as far as congenial company went.

In *Our World*, you write about meeting Molly Malone Cook for the first time at Steepletop, so the place must hold a lot of significance for you:

Steepletop, as it was called, was a place—an estate really—of many acres and much beauty and, of course, great interest. The poet, who had died in 1950, was buried in the woods

beyond the houses—there were two, one a guest house and the other, the more grand, the poet's home. I ran around the 800 acres like a child, helping Norma, or at least being company to her. By and by, however, feeling in need of a life of my own—Norma's possessiveness was formidable—I moved to New York City, to the Village. So much for scene setting.

When I came back to Steepletop one evening, with a friend, Molly, also with a friend, was sitting with Norma at the kitchen table. I took one look and fell, hook and tumble.

In a roundabout way, and through Molly, did Millay's Steepletop bring you to Provincetown?

Yes. I met Molly at Steepletop in the late fifties; she was taking pictures of the house and the estate. Molly was spending her summers in Provincetown—she created what was probably the first, or one of the first, photography galleries on the East Coast. Eventually (1964) I joined her there.

I recently read a *New York Times* article—"The Great(ness) Game," by David Orr—which was, in part, about how Elizabeth Bishop's reputation had to grow over time, as she didn't fit the public's image of "greatness." Orr writes, "It's risky, then, to write poems about the tiny objects on your desk. But that's exactly what Bishop did—and that choice helps explain why she was for a long time considered obviously less 'great' than her close friend Robert Lowell." Do you think Edna St. Vincent Millay has been fairly treated in terms of her literary reputation? And Bishop? Have you seen any improvement over the past few decades in how women poets are treated?

Millay has certainly not been dealt with "fairly," since most of the attention has been on her life, not her life work. (Except for one review by McClatchy.) As for "greatness," what is that? You might ask the critics, but then you have to decide "which critics?" And, yes, women poets are presently dealt with with more fairness and attention, obviously. But, still they (we) are dealt with as "women poets," a kind of subcategory.

In some consideration of my writings, a reviewer once surmised that I must have a private income of some substance, since all I ever seemed to do (in my poems) was wander around Provincetown's woods and its dunes and its long beaches. It was a silly surmise. Looking at the world was one of the important parts of my life, and so that is what I did. It was as simple as that. Poets, if they ever make a living from their writings, do not do so when they are first beginning to publish, and this was years ago. We did not, as I have said before, have much income. We had love and work and play instead.

But the Provincelands around our town held many secrets in their glistening beauty, and as we were young and bold and persistent in the ways of our chosen lives, we were also fairly fearless. Over the years I brought home many things—shells, feathers, once a hurt duck, twice a hurt gull, flowers always. The urgency of suppers simply added a new set of adventures to my ramblings. Along the shores and in the woods I began to recognize what was actually food. Actually everywhere, I learned, the earth is full of interest, artistry, and generosity.

Simple foods these were, that I found, but foods need no more than flavoring to become festive. The borders of the woods were thick with wild bay, as good as the kind that you buy. As I gathered their shining leaves, I could listen

to the cardinal singing nearby, or watch the blue heron on its way from one pond to another lift and dip its enormous wings. A pleasant place to shop, this land, and in almost any season.

I remember one evening making rice—"rice with chicken and almonds" I said to M. as I set the bowls on the table, "only the almonds are imaginary, and the chicken ran away." Still, mixed with the rice and the bay were dark and fragrant slices of that king of mushrooms, the bolete, that I found every fall rising, at first crisp and later melting, in the pinewoods. In this season, for I put many away for the long winter, M. would come with me, and slowly and pleasantly we would fill our baskets. And we found also a plant called orach, with its tender stems and arrow-shaped leaves. Lover of ocean-edges, it sprawls so close to the waves that it comes to the table braced with its own sea salt.

And there were of course the cranberries. Feral cranberries, one might say, for they rose in bogs that were once tended and harvested, but no more. There I would hunch through the morning and have a good time too, and more than once glimpsed a deer watching me from behind the trees, or met the box turtle on his last days of rambling before his long winter sleep—or wrote a poem.

from *Our World*

he wouldn't—is a magnificent poet and prose writer.

As for "persuasion" in poetry (or prose), I think it must just happen with the effort toward it or stitched within it. That is, the writer must first do the best job he or she can, "to get it right"; of course out of the writer's own attitudes and certainties, the reader may be "persuaded," and no doubt the writer hopes so. But the actual, heavy activity of persuading always shows through and is a "spoiler" to the best of poems and books, I think.

When I think about your Provincetown poems and your descriptions of your walks in the woods here, I'm comforted by the thought that so many different lives are still possible here. You probably hear, like I do, the cars and the bars, and the parties and music in the summer, even down here in the East End. And, of course, for a time the town seemed to go, to borrow your ending from "The Sun," "crazy / for power, / for things." I'm hoping it was just a phase, not a permanent shift (and perhaps "The house of money is falling! The weeds are / rising!" as you say in the new poem "Evidence"). It may be too big a question to ask how Provincetown has changed since you first arrived. But has it become harder to live the way you want to here? Have you ever considered leaving?

It's not just Provincetown, it's too much of the whole culture of our country, and plenty of the world, that is "crazy / for power, / for things." We are sick with the drive to success, which generally means the amassment of "things."

Provincetown certainly has changed, it has become richer and poorer. Still, I have friends who live in the decent, "old-fashioned" way, who dig for clams in the morning and pick blueberries in the afternoon, and not only value this beautiful place but have little ambition for "more." The only time I considered leaving (and did, for awhile) was when the clams got too hard to dig and the blueberries didn't suffice. But that wasn't so much about Provincetown as it was about giving my time to writing—I did not have much (if any) income for years and years. So I went away for a while to teach.

Place has been so central to your work—there's been this incredible confluence of your eye with the Provincetown landscape. How would you advise a young poet to find their place, their own Provincetown? And would you still advise poets to move here, if they can find a way?

No, I would not necessarily advise poets to move here. (Exception: a term or two at the FAWC.) The town (whatever part of the town one comes for) can be so congenial it can be too congenial. Young writers—I think this only generally, there can be exceptions—will profit by developing (the words I used earlier) attitudes and certainties out of a wider field of experience and environment.

Years ago I begged a young poet—who loved it here and stayed and stayed—to go away awhile. Something about his work was becoming, I felt, less elastic. Well, he left. He came back too, but better I thought—a better writer and a deeper person—for his travels about the rest of the world.

Among the things I love about your poems are your beautifully crafted endings, your last lines that open up a poem that began with a tiny creature or everyday circumstance and suddenly expand it. For example: "upon this broken world" ("Logan International"), "and put your lips to the world. / And live / your life" ("Mornings at Blackwater"), "my shoulders / covered with stars" ("Walking Home from Oak-Head") and, of course, "your one wild and precious life?" ("The Summer Day"). I like to picture the shape of your poems reflecting something about Provincetown itself: a tiny place whose shape

You've lived in town for more than forty years, I believe. My mother always says you can live here forty years but you'll always be a washashore, always someone "from away." Do you feel the same way? Have you felt that divide, that slow-to-impossible path to acceptance?

Yes, I am still and always will be, I suppose, a washashore. Still, there have been wonderful moments. When the Pulitzer Prize was announced, one acquaintance in Provincetown, Manny Lewis, hugged me and said, "Now you're a town girl."

So that's what it takes! On the other hand, has Provincetown been a good place to continue living the life you want, even after you became so well-known?

Absolutely. Two reasons, for sure. The Provincelands, which I grew to know so intimately, provided and still provide the "material," the origin, of many of my poems. My books, really. Also, to know and care for people of a town, for so many years, has been infinitely precious to me.

For me, your introduction to Frank Gaspar's first book of poems, *The Holyoke*, which you selected for the 1988 Morse Poetry Prize, made me feel that you understood, before most, that there was and is another culture here that could have its own artistic life. But there was something else you were saying in that introduction: "I felt in Gaspar's voice no attempt to persuade me of anything. I felt only the abiding imperative to get it right. Which is, of course, what real writing is about." This, too, has stayed with me—as something more geared toward poetry than essays, I thought at first, but perhaps not. I always smile when I read your line toward the end of your essay "Swoon": "This is the moment in an essay when the news culminates and, or bluntly, the moral appears." Is getting beyond the need to convince or persuade our audience something we should all aspire to as writers—even essayists?

Well, to begin, Frank Gaspar, who grew up in Provincetown and is a part of both of us—and as a very young man he used to stare at the Fine Arts Work Center and wish he could belong, with the certainty that

begins broad and narrows to a point, and whose specifics so often relate to larger trends in the world, a place that is called a microcosm for so many reasons. Can you tell me about your process in finding these endings to your poems? Do they arrive with the rest of the poem, or only long into the revision process?

All “tiny” places (and Provincetown is full of them) are both narrow to a point and hold within themselves the possibility of epiphany.

As for how it happens—sometimes quickly, sometimes after a long wait. Poe said that you need the end of the poem before you begin. I feel (sort of) that he is right; for me, often I sense the end, but the words can hide for any amount of time.

I think of you as a caretaker of a world I mostly abandoned after childhood—the world of the woods, the secret clearings among the trees, the beaches after storms, the moss-lined paths, and the railroad tracks. I hear them calling me back when you say, in “Waste Land: An Elegy”: “I wonder why, in all the years I walked in the old burn dump—this waste place, this secret garden—I never met another soul there, who had come forth for a like reason.” Provincetown has been lucky to have your attention, but do its environmental problems weigh on you more than you have written about in your recent poems and prose?

Yes, the environmental situation bothers me a lot, as it does all sane people. In fact, it scares me to death, the way we exploit this gift, this world. But I think you catch more flies with honey than with vinegar, so I hope to “alert” readers by reminding them of the earth-gift—which we are certainly harming, devaluing, and stand to lose if we don’t change our ways.

I’ve been looking at your friend Varujan Boghosian’s work, and what I’ve seen of it reminds me of something that arises occasionally in your work as well. His clusters of collected objects or relics (in works like *Pipe of Plenty*, *Sonata*, *Pipe Dreams*, and others) are like your lists (such as in “At Herring Cove”). The overall form of your recent book *The Truro Bear and Other Adventures*, with poems for so many different creatures gathered in one place, reminds me of old-fashioned bestiaries, so it is in a way a list or catalog, too. Of course collecting occurs as a theme among artists elsewhere, but here it seems especially intense and lasting. Are we obsessed with preserving and collecting things here out of awareness of the incredible (especially geologically speaking) fragility of this land? What do you think it means? Have you consciously included lists in your work, or consciously limited them, as perhaps too simple a form?

I like lists, and when it comes to me to make one I really don’t think of it much, I just go for it. However I do believe what we hold in the mind outwits time, and the list is a quick and rich offering of reminders.

In reading New England writing, I’ve been struck by how much of it recently has been elegiac, mourning the region’s rapidly changing places and ways of life. But I’ve also been wondering what comes next—where do its writers go from here? I see you as someone who’s stepped out of that cycle of trends and writes about something more timeless: wonder. (Of course, you have your elegies too, but they are in the minority.) Do you think that this line of thinking, this writing of the “book of not-wanting-to-let-go,” will, or should, be replaced by something else?

I think probably there is no useful “should”; it’s—whatever the subject and tone—how well it’s done. But I do think it would be more useful to think less of personal nostalgia or personal loss. The whole country now, or a lot of it, is composed of small towns that have grown into unrecognizable monsters, and clearly this is a worldwide issue. The way things are moving forward is much more than a matter of personal loss. “If we don’t love the soil we lose our souls,” said M. C. Richards.

There is something else I’d like to ask someone who has spent so much time in this town, and in its dunes and woods. The back side scares me, I feel a darkness (malevolence is probably too strong a word) to this place and I can’t help thinking of shipwreck survivors wandering out there in the snow, never finding help, or of those numbered graves in the smallpox cemetery, or of arsons in the 1930s that Mary Heaton Vorse tells us spread through the woods, fires that smoldered in the undergrowth and couldn’t be put out. Does this land, or the sea here, often make you afraid?

Never.

Another reason I ask this is because I feel an edge to many of your poems. It’s in the words you use sometimes, such as “a red and digestible joy / sickled up” and “scalding, aortal light,” and, in lines about that “Little Owl Who Lives in the Orchard,” who is both “a memo / from the offices of fear,” “A message . . . from . . . *Oblivion and Co.*,” and “a valentine.” You also write in that poem:

and when I hear him in the orchard
fluttering
down the little aluminum
ladder of his scream—
when I see his wings open, like two black ferns,

a flurry of palpitations
as cold as sleet
rockets across the marshlands
of my heart,
like a wild spring day.

This reminds me of what you have said about Robert Frost, how readers sometimes miss his darkness, “In the lyrical poems of Robert Frost there is almost always something wrong, a dissatisfaction or distress. We are hearing two different messages: everything is all right, say the meter and the rhyme; everything is not all right, say the words.” Do you feel it is imperative for your readers to not miss this side to your work, or that they might be shortchanged if they only look for the swans and the deer and the flowers? This seems to be what you are saying in your poem “Singapore,” in

In a note to John Cheever, Saul Bellow wrote, “You were engaged, as a writer should be, in transforming yourself. There’s nothing that counts really except that transforming action of the soul.” This seems both profound and correct to me. When I think of Mary Oliver’s poetry—and I think about it a great deal—I find that its appeal, its strength, its necessity, certainly derives not only from the mastery of surface—prosody, tropes, diction, and the rest of the long catalogue of this poet’s glittering tools—but from the underlying transformative power of the soul, which she makes manifest for us with an unwavering passion. Her soul is suffused with generosity, and her power resides in its authentic nature. It’s not merely a poetic construct.

Mary is the most generous soul I know. She is the one who brings home the broken gull to splint its wing, who nurtures the abused pup, who takes in the destitute addict, who loves the world as she finds it. I have spent some of the happiest moments of my life in her company, in her light-filled home by the sea, where I myself have been taken in from time to time, and where I never cease to visit and feel welcome. One never

knows who will walk in with an armload of books, a bottle of wine, a forty-pound lobster, a load of laundry to be done. I make linguica rolls whenever I’m there. The conversations go on forever and include everything.

Mary can be hilarious. I remember nights when she and I and Molly have laughed ourselves foolish. And there are grave and serious moments, too. A ghost came once when my wife and little son were there, and the ghost sang to my son, and we all heard it, and my wife, fierce, rose to protect her baby. You never know. One day I came back from Clapps Pond and announced that I had found a box turtle and a vole. “A vole,” Mary said, “really? What did it look like?” I described it. “Did it have a little beak?” “Yes,” I said. “Oh,” she said, “then that would be a shrew.” “A shrew?” “Oh yes,” she said, those amazing lovely blue eyes looking right into me, “I had four of them in the freezer one winter.” Of course she did! No one blinked. No one asked why. The conversation just rolled on. It’s like that. It’s always like that.

Frank Gaspar

The poet's role, for Oliver, is to learn to listen to what has no tongue, perhaps even to *become* that tongue, a translator for the lessons of moss and hawk and lily. Oliver shares my Renaissance painter's sense that each encounter with the natural world contributes to the artist's spiritual education.

Wonder awakens the moral sense; in the face of the marvelous, we say, *how can I live up to this? What is my life next to it?* Oliver moves directly from wonder to wondering; seeking instruction, she asks, *how shall I live?* Owl and goldenrod impart their lessons—not so much because they have an intention as because they *are* an intention, are purely themselves, in full immersion in their own beings. They have a sort of seamless identity which the self-conscious being cannot; from their wholeness of being comes the poet's lessons. The hummingbird, for instance, comes to the trumpet vine

like a small green angel, to soak
his dark tongue
in happiness —

and who doesn't want
to live with the brisk
motor of his heart
singing. . .
("Hummingbird Pauses
at the Trumpet Vine")

Those creatures which the poet of Genesis asserts were made before us can teach us, Oliver suggests, how to live. No wonder the poet, as she noted in a recent interview, hides pencils in the trees along her favorite walks; the world through which she moves brims with incipient revelation.

Excerpt from "Natural Science: In Praise of Mary Oliver," by Mark Doty, from Provincetown Arts 1995.

which you write about glimpsing a woman cleaning an airport bathroom: "Yes, a person wants to stand in a happy place, in a poem. / But first we must watch her as she stares down at her labor."

I accept the darkness, that's why the "back side" doesn't scare me.

And, I agree with you about Frost. Such wonderful music! And within it, such discontent, such fretting.

At your reading in Provincetown at the U.U. church last fall, I remember your line about having a "forty-year conversation" with Molly, and how the audience seemed to know just what you meant. I started to think your career has been another multiyear conversation with this audience, too. The response at that reading was intense, so much warmer and more personal than at most readings. Do you enjoy reading here more than in other places? Do you ever write consciously for a local audience, when you describe these places we all share?

I enjoy reading anywhere, though I can hardly abide the travel. When I read in Provincetown, yes, I try to offer more poems (light and dark) about "our" town, "our" woods, "our" ocean.

I remember your question during the U.U. reading about "Wild Geese"—you said, "Is this my chestnut?" at which we laughed and yet seemed pretty insistent that we had to hear it. Have you ever wanted to take back a line, have you ever felt something's been misinterpreted? Or once it's out there, does it just belong to the fans, to do with what they will?

Pretty much, once it's "out there," I leave it alone. But there is one word I think

shouldn't be in one poem, and when I read I leave it out. I'll let you wonder what it is, though.

You've been traveling a lot recently—in both India and Mexico this winter, for example. Is this a new pattern for you, to go so far away for so long? Do you find it good for your work? Among all your poems of Provincetown woods and beaches, exceptions like "Singapore" have also felt very important to me. I also see that you've written a new poem along these lines set in Mexico, "First Days in San Miguel de Allende," in *Evidence*. That poem ends with these somewhat atypical lines:

Meanwhile, on the streets of San Miguel de Allende
it is easy to smile.
"Hola," I say to the children.
"Hi," they say, as I pass

with my passport, and money, in my pocket.

What have these recent travels meant to you? Do you know yet how they will find their way into your work?

Again, I don't know much yet. It's hard for me to write about a place I'm not familiar with, since my attention is usually fused with a local knowledge of what I'm attending. I remember, in New Zealand, being frustrated because I didn't know the names of the trees, for example. Here in Provincetown, even if I don't actually name them, I *know* them. But I love the traveling I've done recently, and look forward to more. (And, always, coming home.)

I can't leave out your dog Percy, can I? How is he? How is your campaign to make him famous coming along?

Percy—one stunning wonderful dog, among quite a few I know—keeps talking to me, so the poems keep happening. Almost always, in the Q&A part of a reading, someone wants to know what kind of dog he is. Well, he's a bichon, with a bichon's astounding spirit. While I was in Mexico he went on vacation with friends in Cambridge—and had a great time, I hear.

Reading *Thirst*, from 2006, it struck me how much more autobiographical and overtly spiritual it is compared to most of your other volumes. Does this mark a permanent change in your work? Or was it something you needed to do, at the time?

I guess we need to wait to see what is permanent or not—or rather I have to wait to see. The writing of *Thirst* took place during a very difficult time, which did change me, of course. Some of it ebbs, or I live with it; some is, I believe, a permanent enrichment.

Percy and Books (Eight)

Percy does not like it when I read a book.
He puts his face over the top of it and moans.
He rolls his eyes, sometimes he sneezes.
The sun is up, he says, and the wind is down.
The tide is out and the neighbor's dogs are playing.
But Percy, I say. Ideas! The elegance of language!
The insights, the funniness, the beautiful stories
that rise and fall and turn into strength, or courage.

Books? says Percy. I ate one once, and it was enough.
Let's go.

from *Red Bird*

Poems by Mary Oliver

Little Bird in the Pepper Tree

Don't mind my inexplicable delight
to know your name,
Wilson's warbler,
yellow as a lemon, with a black cap.

Just do what you do, dipping branch by branch
down to the fountain
to sip neatly; then fly away.

A name is not a leash.

Dancing in Mexico

Not myself,
but Maria,
who, when her work is done,
tunes in the radio,
goes out into the garden,
picks up the front feet of the little dog,
and dances. She dances.

Stopping to Think About It

Gray-winged mockingbird
in the sharp shrubbery

with open beak, and a tremble
in the gray throat—

a mockingbird lives how long?
nine or ten years maybe,

three thousand days perhaps,
singing and singing.

How Perfectly

How perfectly
and neatly
opens the pink rose

this bright morning,
the sun warm
on my shoulders,

its heat
on the opening petals.
Possibly

it is the smallest,
the least important event
at this moment

in the whole world.
Yet I stand there,
utterly happy.



I used to teach poetry to children in New York City public schools, and I would often read them a poem by Mary Oliver—"The Summer Day," I think it was. The more I read it the more I grew to respect it, both the sentiment and the subtle craft that held it together. It seemed as simple as a breath, and yet it was a machine—not one word could be replaced.

More than any poet I can think of, Mary Oliver embodies the ancient Chinese definition of the job of the poet, which is, as I understand it, to name the plants and animals of this world. Is there an animal Oliver has encountered, a type of weather, a flower, which has not been named, and then slightly-subtly-elevated, transformed, by her eye?

I went to a funeral last week. The pastor read two poems during the service, both by Mary Oliver. This didn't surprise me—her poems are both celebrations and dirges. Each was perfect for that day heavy with rain, which made the magnolia blossoms stand out even more against the darkness.

Nick Flynn

Grief is part of that package, certainly. But even grief is only part of the amazing fact of each of us—we have been given the gift of a life, of some portion of Time, the gifts of the earth and the ability to love. I think it is requisite that we accept the whole gift, all the gifts, and be grateful, whatever measure of dark days or joyous days is our portion.

Also I want to say this. While I honor certainly the work that has been left to us by Stanley Kunitz and Norman Mailer, my life in Provincetown (I came here when I was twenty-eight) has been made full and rich through friendships with many, so many people of Provincetown, whose existence never touched the literary world. Many, by now, have died. But they, to me and to many, gave the richness and humor and earnestness of their lives as wondrous example. In any contemplation of the enrichment of other lives to mine, no one, literary or otherwise, stands higher.

OONA PATRICK is a Provincetown native working as a writer and editor in Brooklyn. She earned an MFA from the Bennington Writing Seminars, which was followed by a residency at the Millay Colony for the Arts in 2001. Her non-fiction has appeared in a number of literary journals and she has had notable essays listed in *Best American Essays* and *Best American Travel Writing*.

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That lovely phrase, "a permanent enrichment." Would you say that grief can be this for us? Think about all the people the town has lost in the last few years—Kunitz and Mailer the most prominent among them—and even though the loss is great, I also realize we have been blessed, and probably permanently changed, to have had them here.)

Morrow, like most things, can be denied or experienced. I live my life according to the suggestions of Emerson, one of which is to live the experienced life.

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Foreword

By Thom Ward

IN HIS LATEST collection, *The Monster Loves His Labyrinth: Notebooks*, Charles Simic muses on poetry, poetics, history, politics, visual art, music, cooking, and, of course, wine. He presents a collage of compelling sentences, stanzas, and paragraphs. And though it may be true, as Simic writes, "The secret ambition of any literary work is to make gods and devils take notice," I'm most jolted out of my seat when this Pulitzer Prize-winning poet leans into fresh simile and metaphor. There are too many metaphor-rich lines in *Monster* to have a favorite, but this one continues to bang around in my head: "A poem is like a bank robbery: The idea is to get in, get their attention, get the money, and get out."

Certainly, the twelve poems I had the great fortune of reading and selecting for this issue of *Provincetown Arts* know how to get in. They get the heart, the mind, and the soul of the reader. They leave their marks and make their escapes. That's how strong the imaginative impulses and linguistic brilliances are in these poems, what Simic calls "the money."

I chose Stephen Dunn's poem, "Sending the Wrong Man Out into the Field," before I read Simic's book. But it's worth noting that in this sharp "confessional" poem, Dunn amplifies Simic's claim. The poem begins, "It wasn't exactly shopping, I hate shopping, / but more like reconnaissance, a getting in / and a getting out as fast as I could, / camouflaged as a consumer." Or as Anne Coon advances in her muscular lyric "The Hardest Work": "When a pure, clear thing emerges / something we wish to own / to be owned by / we welcome it with bare hands."

Along with these two excellent poems are ten others that get in, get your attention, get the money, and get out. First person, third person, rhythm-driven verse, the metrical and the metered, the playful and the meditative, that delicately balance levity and gravitas, idea and image, external and internal weather. All of these poems remind us that the line between joy and grief, birth and death is feathery-thin.

So relish these dozen for the light they kaleidoscope, the shadows they engender. Or as Simic puts it in his wonderful, wicked little book: "The soul is a shadow cast by the light of consciousness. In the meantime, I can feel a sneeze coming."

Stephen Dunn

Sending the Wrong Man Out into the Field

It wasn't exactly shopping, I hate shopping,
but more like reconnaissance, a getting in
and a getting out as fast as I could,
camouflaged as a consumer. So there I was,
among model, sparsely peopled rooms,
eyeing the love seats, and testing out
chairs that both swiveled and rocked.

A salesman, unaware of the extravagance
of his question, asked if there was anything
he could do for me. There wasn't, I was sorry
to say, and to get away from him I drifted
to where the Lazy-boys languished
near the all-purpose wall units and their facades
of spiny, not-to-be-read classics.

I wanted to get home, to file my report to her
who had sent me and would be waiting for it.
I knew how famous I was in her eyes
for doing half a job, famous for acting
on the first thing I saw, or getting distracted,
but I couldn't stop collecting
snippets of overheard conversation,

like, "I can't live without a leather ottoman,"
or "You have no proof of purchase,"
which I heard as "of purpose," things I hoped
would amuse her. I'd try to collect some more,
then thought, No, better not, it's time to rank
and measure, come back home
with something like intelligence, maybe even

with some notes on end tables and glassware—
which weren't on my list—because who knows
what odd detail might unlock the secret code,
the one that women know, and men like me
go out into foreign territory to discover,
then puzzle and brood about. Who can be sure
of a love seat? How to return home with honor?

Sarah Freligh

The Birth Mother on Her Daughter's First Birthday

It's late and the woman one cell over
is finally quiet. Awake, she's at war
with life, *that motherfucker*, fights
sleep when it threatens to take her down
for the night, struggling
and punching the thin sheets
to keep what she imagines is hers.
The guard says it's snowing
—*a real sonofabitch to drive in*—
a foot already and more to fall.
On our first date, your father
drove to the K Mart parking lot
and carved figure eights in the new snow.
I sat in the passenger's seat and said
go faster because I liked
how his biceps looked
under his flannel shirt
when he yanked the steering wheel
and made that car obey him.

I should tell you everyone's innocent
in here. Guilt is a nametag we wear
for therapy sessions, tear up
and discard on the way out.
We sit in a circle and drink
bitter coffee, tell stories
that scald the tongue.
The day you were born you felt
like a bowl of hot pasta the doctor
spilled on my stomach. The nurse said
your baby is beautiful but she was wrong.
You looked like Eisenhower,
and you were never mine,
just something I might
have borrowed for a while.

Chase Twichell

Weird Hotel

When he says the word *tumor*
I'm noticing the doctor's hip new
minimalist glasses, green titanium
with non-reflective lenses,
which make him look worldly and kind.

I wake up in a weird hotel
tethered to various machines.
Pain is confined to a faraway pasture;
it gazes at me over the fence.
When it leans its huge body
against the spindly rails,
I push a button that shocks it,
and it backs off, but continues
to watch me, waiting for a chance
to come lie down with me
because my body is its one true home.

A seam with staples runs
from navel to pubis, sealing a body
now devoid of female parts. All gone!
Only the common human ones remain.

The dogs come to visit,
but they live with the wolves now,
and keep outside the circle of light
around the bed, in the snow,
their coats burdened,
and will not let me touch them.

I dream I lie in my slippery green
sleeping bag on a hard bunk
at the monastery, vowing
Desires are inexhaustible;
I vow to put an end to them.
And it's true, I have no desires here
among the chirring and chiming machines.

How strange, to have left the world
and returned to it
having taken nothing with me
and bringing nothing back.

Anne C. Coon

The Hardest Work

We spew words indiscriminately
to be cut, reassembled, sanitized,
burned.

Ideas snap through our fingers
inserted, then deleted
surety moves to chaos
gutters fill with run-off conviction.

Re-considerations and doubt
from within and without
fight our smarter, wittier selves
arm wrestling, body-slammings
to say or not to say
whom to harm, to deny
what to hide or reveal.

What exhausts us
more than this?

When a pure, clear thing emerges
something we wish to own
to be owned by
we welcome it with bare hands
sweet bibelot, ours for a moment,
fleeting as the saints Emily lost
when finding her way.

Kurt Brown

Family Factory

There were two employees: myself and Jurgis,
a Lithuanian who hardly spoke—not only English,
but anything—the words sealed up in him
like the concrete mix we bagged all summer,

a blend the owner had invented, and built
his own factory to produce. *What-a-Crete*,
he called it, “Just add water” in the right amount
and it would “set forever, like steel.”

Above the roof, a huge hopper with a funnel
that fed a nozzle in the room below
so *What-a-Crete* would come sloughing down
in a rush of powder, gravel, and dirt,

each rush a measured amount to fill the bags
that rolled beneath the nozzle, one
by one, on a short conveyer belt. My job
was simple: grasp each bag by the top

and fold it over, run it through a sewing
machine that stitched it shut, and heave the bag
onto a waiting pallet on the floor. We wore
white paper masks to filter the dust,

so we looked like physicians: “Surgeons of sand
and gravel,” I joked, but Jurgis never smiled
and the owner sat inside his office
grimacing at old accounts. When we’d fill

a pallet, I would drive the fork lift up,
slip the tongs between the slats, and raise
it high, then swivel to replace it once again
among the others in the factory aisles.

Sometimes, I’d miss, and puncture the bags
with a tong, which brought the owner
out, waving his cane in the air like a saber.
Watch what you’re doing! and I’d apologize

then take my place again on the line.
But Jurgis never yelled. He’d lost everyone:
parents, friends, his younger brother
Gvidas, whom the Russians tortured until

he spilled it all—names, dates—his perforated body
tossed into an unmarked grave. And here
was Jurgis, exiled with a stupid American boy,
measuring the earth, filling each bag
again tenderly, his heart set, hardened forever.

Victoria Redel

First

Most days we were fools
for the French thing,

went at it all twirl
and twirl

or took our good time,
took breaks
to catnap our tongues.

We were what we ate,
fruit,
back and forth,

we shared the last thread
of something mint.

Scholars, gold rushers,
cartographers
of a first wilderness,

this is from before
we dared
go further,

when our mouths
were a holy
dervish,
not preparation,
but prayer and the ecstasy.

Wherever you are,
driving
whichever back road
of suburban middle-age,
whatever courage
brings you through
to whomever you love,

slow down,
good man,
open the window,
good woman.

There it is again,
the old frontier,
sweet anticipation, sweet
breath.
I blow you a kiss.

Ralph Black

Maxwell Smart's *Ars Poetica*

Our man Max is at work in his study,
sharpening pencils, riffling books.
He eighty-sixes the love poem
he's been writing to Ninety-Nine—
Je t'aime, he's written, trying on
his agency French, the *langue des espions*
he learned while grilling double-crossers
in Marseille, priming himself for a life
of the mind. *Je t'adore*, he writes,
then slashes it out, doubting the slant-rhyme
with *Oriole*, which he's added just there
because of short red dresses and high
black boots, and not because of the bird-
rifled seeds on the feeder out back,
since his room is shuttered tight as
a Cone of Silence—a thing, of course,
he could use right now, shouting his secrets
to the long-legged, shit-kicking *femme fatale*
sprawled on the *chaise longue* of his longing
(ooh, that's good), trying again to control
the chaos of metaphor and irregular verbs.
Come on, Max, he can hear her say,
his name lifting away from her lips
like a dangerously purred interrogation.
He'll try again, our Smith-and-Wessoning
wordsmith, our cool-as-a-line-break
inside man—a crown of couplets, a full
clip of ammo and amplitude. He'll rhyme
lithe with *breathe*, *standoff* with *handcuff*,
trilling through his lyrical calisthenics sweetly
as Bruce Lee roundhousing bad guys
on channel four. He's clever that way,
though few take notice—as the rhythms
start to shift like a ringing in his shoe.

James L. Hale

My Muse

She turns my crank, I don't know why.
Perhaps it's that she brings me back to now.
Though as for that, it could be that we die
And simply don't know how. We don't know how.

Because this is most definitely not
A dress rehearsal. Therefore, eat and love;
And worry not for why nor when nor what,
Nor what's below nor what might be above.

And what's to come? Oh, wouldn't that be grand!
To know one's fate, as if it might change things.
To know you're blessed, forgotten or, damn! Damned!
Then bless or curse the Stringer of the strings.

True love is love that freely frees the free.
In essence, nothing less than you and me.

Samuel Hazo

Welcome to Used-to-Was

After you pass the Orthodontic
Center near the Chrysler dealership,
you'll see an Apostolic Church
between two blocks of Civil War
frame-houses with flags
a-flutter from every porch,
a neon sign that welcomes
hunters, and all that's left
of an old Sunoco station
gone to weeds and desolation
near a second Apostolic Church
that used to be a clinic
for sick dogs.

The locals call
this village Used-to-Was because
the way it is is not
the way it was.

Storefronts
are boarded up for sale or rent
except for one that offers
cigarettes, cold beer and porn,
an office selling bail-bonds
by appointment, and markets hawking
shooting duds for hunters in deer
season.

The highway leading
into town becomes Main Street,
which has the same three stoplights
that it's had since the Depression.
If all the lights are green
your next time by, it takes
two minutes—plus or minus—
and you're in and through and out.

Eric Gansworth

Because There Are No Photos and We Will Forget One Day

The county clerk's office opens
at 8:30 and amid cardboard skeletons
and crepe witches and monsters risen
from the dead like unnamed saviors,
I reading a library sale copy
of *Angela's Ashes*, wondering
what all the fuss was about, and you
twiddling your thumbs,
the only person I know
who does this with no irony,
staring idly as cheerful workers,
"morning people," filter in,
we wait, the first in line.

As clouds roll in, darkening the sky,
the clerk sends us across the town square
through two metal detectors into probate court
and almost nobody is ever happy to make a court
appearance, where the judge asks one question
and when we answer "nearly twenty-five years,"
he signs the waiver and wishes us the best
of luck nearly twenty-five years too late.

The clerk says their Justice is occupied
that morning, but gives us a VFW Post address
a few blocks away, and inside,
there are only three people—said VFW,
probably of Korea, and the man and woman
he is escorting from their early morning
shakes, and we hope we are seeking
the person behind the basement bar.

He leads us up to a cleared reception hall
room bordered with chairs upside down
on tables and filled with the smell of paint
on damp, old autumn wood and alcohol
spilled by dancers grown clumsy in age
and anesthetic where we, for lack
of a better word, sidle up to a shelf,
as he reaches for his black plastic binder
and says: "you don't have rings
or anything like that, do you?"

flipping to the right pages
when we reveal them, those two bands
unmistakable in their simplicity,
and though he stumbles every now and then
and our only other witness, beside
this man and the maps of his past
running burst veins across his nose,
is a radio, lost between two stations
phasing a call-in show between bursts
of oldies rock and roll that could have
never been thought of as oldies by kids
inventing the summer of love a little over
forty years before. We still find ourselves

struggling to repeat vows
because they are not
abstractions, like previews
to movies we've not yet seen
because in twenty-four
years and nine months to the day
we've done richer and we've done poorer and
we've done in health and we've done in sickness and
we've seen windows of death do us part
too many times than we'd care to share,
and afterward, back at the clerk's office
across town, while we wait for the certificate,
it starts to rain, in Pittsfield, Massachusetts
and though we've brought the camera,
we still don't know anyone, and it seems
like this moment should not be documented
by strangers, so we drive out in the rain,
brilliant orange leaves darkening to
the true colors of life weathered,
heading home.

Ralph Black's poems have appeared in *West Branch*, *Tar River*, and the *Southern Poetry Review*. His book, *Turning Over the Earth*, was published by Milkweed Editions earlier this century. He teaches in the English Department at the State University College of New York in Brockport, New York.

Kurt Brown is founder of the Aspen Writers' Conference, and of Writers' Conferences and Centers. He is the author of six chapbooks and five full-length collections of poetry, including *Return of the Prodigals*, *More Things in Heaven and Earth*, *Fables from the Ark*, *Future Ship*, and a new collection, *No Other Paradise*, due out in 2010 from Red Hen Press. A collection of the poems of Flemish poet Herman de Coninck entitled *The Plural of Happiness*, which Brown and his wife translated, was released in the Field Translation Series in 2006. He teaches poetry workshops and craft classes at Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, New York, and was recently the McEver Visiting Chair in Writing at Georgia Tech in Atlanta, Georgia.

Grace Cavalieri has published several books of poetry. *Water on the Sun* (Bordighera Press, 2006) was listed on PEN American Center's 2006 Best Books List. Her recent play, *Quilting the Sun*, received a key to the city of Greenville, South Carolina, among other production awards. *Anna Nicole: Poems* (Menendez Publication, 2008) is her latest book. She produces and hosts *The Poet and the Poem from the Library of Congress* for public radio.

Anne C. Coon's poetry appears in *Nimrod*, *The Baltimore Review*, *Earth's Daughters*, *Phi Kappa Phi Forum*, *Women's Studies*, *The Lyric*, *Proteus*, *Pennsylvania English*, *Northeast Corridor*, and the McGraw-Hill anthology *Literature: Reading Fiction, Poetry, Drama and the Essay*. Her books include *Henry James Sat Here* (The Old School Press, Bath, UK); *Via del Paradiso* (FootHills Publishing); *Daedalus' Daughter* (FootHills Publishing); and *Discovering Patterns in Mathematics and Poetry*, coauthored with Marcia Birken (Editions Rodopi, Amsterdam).

Stephen Dunn's *What Goes On: Selected and New Poems 1995–2009* was recently published by Norton. His poetry collection *Different Hours* was awarded the 2001 Pulitzer Prize. He lives in Frostburg, Maryland.

Sarah Freligh's poetry and fiction have been published in many literary journals as well as featured on the NPR syndicated show *Only a Game* and Garrison Keillor's *Writer's Almanac*. She is the recipient of grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Constance Saltonstall Foundation, and the New York Foundation for the Arts. A chapbook of her poems, *Bonus Baby*, was published in 2002 and later expanded into *Sort of Gone*, which was published in February 2008 by Turning Point Books. A former sportswriter for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, she is currently an adjunct professor of creative writing at St. John Fisher College in Rochester, New York.

Eric Gansworth is Lowery Writer-in-Residence at Canisius College in Buffalo, New York. His work includes *Mending Skins* (PEN Oakland Award, novel, 2006), *A Half-Life of Cardio-Pulmonary Function* (National Book Critics Circle's "Good Reads List," Poetry, 2008), and *Re-Creation Story* (Public Theater's Native Theater Festival, NYC, 2008).

James L. Hale is an affable self-medicating bipolar dilettante. Founder and sole excommunicant, PSGBTUA (Pre-Suppositional Gender-Balanced Trinitarian Universalist Agnostic) Church; now an Evangelical Atheist. Published in *Philosophy Now* magazine (www.PhilosophyNow.org), *Two Rivers Review*, and online at www.asininepoetry.com/hopin/191. Single 23 years, married 35. Putative father of three. Studied plagiarism at Dartmouth College; learned it was wrong at Syracuse University College of Law. Self-disbarred since 1985. Much happier now.

Samuel Hazo is McNulty Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Duquesne University, founder and Director of the International Poetry Forum in Pittsburgh, and the first State Poet of Pennsylvania (1993–2003). His most recent books are *The Song of the Horse: A Selection of Poems, 1958–2008* and *This Part of the World*, a novel.

Philip Memmer's latest book of poems, *Lucifer: A Hagiography*, won the 2008 Idaho Prize for Poetry and was published in January 2009 by Lost Horse Press. His other collections of poems include *Threat of Pleasure* (Word Press, 2008) and *Sweetheart, Baby, Darling* (Word Press, 2004), as well as three chapbooks. His poems have appeared in such journals as *Poetry*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Epoch*, *Mid-American Review*, and *Tar River Poetry*, and in several anthologies, including *180 More: Extraordinary Poems for Every Day*. He lives in upstate New York, where he directs the Arts Branch of the YMCA of Greater Syracuse and the Downtown Writer's Center, and also serves as associate editor for Tiger Bark Press.

Victoria Redel is the author of two books of poetry and three books of fiction. Her latest novel, *The Border of Truth* (Counterpoint, 2007), was a 2007 Barnes and Noble Discovery Book. *Loverboy* (Graywolf, 2001/Harcourt, 2002), was awarded the 2001 S. Mariella Gable Novel Award and the 2002 Forward Silver Literary Fiction Prize and was chosen in 2001 as a Los Angeles Times Best Book. *Loverboy* was also adapted for a feature film directed by Kevin Bacon. Her most recent collection of poems, *Swoon* (University of Chicago Press, 2003), was a finalist for the James Laughlin Award. Redel is on the faculty of Sarah Lawrence College.

Chase Twichell is the author of six books of poetry, most recently *Dog Language* (Copper Canyon, 2005). *Horses Where the Answers Should Have Been: New & Selected Poems* is forthcoming from the same press in 2010. She is also the translator, with Tony Stewart, of *The Lover of God*, poems by the Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore (also Copper Canyon) and coeditor with Robin Behn of *The Practice of Poetry: Writing Exercises from Poets Who Teach* (HarperCollins, 1992). She lives in the Adirondacks with her husband, the novelist Russell Banks.



MARGARITE LANDRY PHOTO BY JOE LANDRY

Blue Moon

BY MARGARITE LANDRY

In the novel Blue Moon, an abandoned eleven-year-old boy breaks into a suburban house, and his life becomes intertwined with that of the woman living there, her young son, and a burned-out social worker who is also an army vet. The boy's addict mother eventually returns to claim him, forcing all of the characters to move past their own preconceptions and limitations. While the boy is devoted to his mother, he knows that she turns tricks for drugs in their welfare motel. It's also apparent that his suburban "mother" and "little brother" have become very attached to him.

Landry was inspired to write Blue Moon after she met a young boy on the street, who asked her where she was going. She said she was going to teach at the college, but he didn't know what a college was. It made her wonder what would happen if a so-called "disadvantaged" child suddenly became part of a middle-class home. The result is a novel that deals with the hidden injuries of class, and the healing powers of love, family, and innocence.

PROLOGUE

Brian Talks to His Caseworker

Recording of a Session, October 1

I GET OFF THE SCHOOL BUS that day, and I know my mother is gone. Boom. Just like that. Even before I went up the stairs on the motel. Even before I unlock the door, there's something bad happening. In your stomach, like, is where you feel it. The drapes with them big ferns things on them. Shut, like always. The TV was off. It was like some ghost, or something. It was empty.

The school bus guy always lets us kids from the motel get off in the parking lot. He ain't supposed to, but he does. He's okay, except for when he turned Jarelle in, on account of he was smoking on the bus.

The next day, Jarelle gets suspension. No surprise. So he spends the whole next day watching TV in his unit, which is on the first floor, right under us.

But this day, anyway, the one I'm telling you about, the driver was feeling in a good mood, and he doesn't see anyone smoking, so he lets us all off in a bunch. There's nine of us kids here, now, at the motel. Who go to the school.

Then I seen Jarelle on the stairs, and he says to me, "Yo, come over and see me later, Brian." I says, "Yo, later," because Jarelle always talks like he's in one of them gangsta rap videos. And like always, that day, I had the key around my neck for the unit, on a lanyard, like, that says BRAZIL USA BRAZIL USA over and over, that my mom gave me for Christmas.

So the room she lives in was empty. Not in the bedroom, not in my room next door, not in the kitchenette, and I check in the bathroom and it's her hairbrush there, and her shampoo bottles, and body rinses, all lined up along the edge of the bathtub. But she's gone. And her handbag ain't there, neither, nor where she keeps it usually on the dresser with the mirror.

So I sit on her bed, and watch the news channel for a couple hours, hoping I'll see if there's an accident, or something. I eat the last cookies in a bag of Pecan Sandies, even though they hurt my teeth. I ate them and watched about the Israelis and the Palestinians, and I was wondering how it would be if people were fighting like that here, in America. How would it be if the Americans and the Brazilians were fighting. And then which side would I be on, because I am American, but I'm Brazilian, too. And if you're a little bit Brazilian, here, that makes you all Brazilian. Then I thought how I would put a flag all bled out and full of stars, on the back of my car when I'm old enough to drive, and get the sticker that says Yo heart Brazil. Brazil Soccer, world champions.

After a while it starts to get dark. I could hear the TV in the unit next door, and I thought about telling Mrs. Ramírez, who is playing the TV so loud, and all, that I was waiting for my mother to come back. I don't know why I'd tell her. She cooks a lot for her kids, who are like little babies, most of them. Three of them.

I was getting hungry. Then I thought maybe she left a note, like it would say she was gone out to the movies, or gone to the store to buy some stuff, and I looked all over in the drawers, and I thought maybe she left it tucked in the mirror in the bedroom, and maybe it fell down behind, so I moved the dresser. One fell down behind, once, when she was going out with Paul.

But there wasn't no note that I could see. I began to think about Paul, and how he was so pissed off all the time, and how he didn't like it if you said he was wrong about something.

He said he could kick butt. "I can kick your stupid stinky-ass butt, Brian," he said. I remember he was rolling a jay when he said that. He wanted me to go out of the room, because I was annoying him, he said. My mother didn't hear him say that. She didn't like it when he said that about me.

I watched some more TV. And I thought, she hasn't gone away with Paul this time. I just had the feeling she didn't. So after the eleven o'clock news, and Mrs. Ramírez came to say I should turn down

the TV so the kids could sleep, I said okay, and she asked, "Where's Irene?" And I said, "She's out somewhere, Mrs. Ramírez." And she clucked her teeth, like, "Do you know where she went?"

And I said, "Sure." So Mrs. Ramírez looked at me like I'm lying, and then she shook her head, and asked did I want some dinner. I said no. I figured I'd wait for her, and truthfully, I felt like if I ate dinner, then she wouldn't come back.

So around midnight I put on my sneakers that my mother got at the Goodwill, and I go knock on Jarelle's door, and his mother says, "You got to go to school, tomorrow, Jarelle, you can't fart around."

I think she was smoking a little dope, then. Jarelle knows his mother will let him stay out, when she's been dope smoking. She don't care if he gets into trouble, either. She says he is just being a kid, for Chrissakes. Really, like Jarelle says, she don't care as long as she can smoke dope.

Jarelle told her he'd come back in an hour. I was afraid she'd ask where my mother was, but she didn't say nothing. So we creeped by Eddy the night guy in the office, who was smoking and watching reality TV, like usual. Jarelle said, "You want to hit the machines?"

I said no. Jarelle means he'll go to the newspaper machines at the Mobil station down the hill, now that it's closed, and he bangs the side of the machines so they drop the quarters. I wanted to eat, I told him. Jarelle laughed. "I know where you can eat, and it's really good."

I always get in trouble when I go with Jarelle. He's my best friend, but he's very dumb, sometimes. I mean, he can do things that you would know would get you in trouble, and I think he likes getting caught, sometimes. So he told me there was a house across the highway, that was off in the woods, and he had been looking in the windows, and it had a big kitchen door that was a slider, and he had already got it open.

We were standing on the side of the highway, waiting for a break in the traffic so we could run across. Jarelle always runs first, and the drivers hardly have time to honk at him, usually. I thought that Jarelle was already in enough trouble for lighting up a Marlboro on the bus, but his mother don't care if he gets into trouble, as long as she gets her assistance.

And I was worried about my mother. I thought I could go get something to eat with Jarelle, and then when I got back home she would be there. And maybe I could even bring her something to eat, like a sandwich. I ran across the road really fast, and two cars came right after me, which made my heart beat faster.

Jarelle knew the way through the woods, around the edge of a pond near the industrial park, and past the microwave tower that my mother said was frying our brains and giving us microwave cancer. I didn't feel nothing when I ran under it. After a while Jarelle went up a hill in the dark, on a path, and then I seen the lights for this house in the distance. The house had a lot of lights, in the upstairs. Some big pine trees grew around it, and when I got close I could see inside. The kitchen was right on the bottom, and I waited beside Jarelle and looked at the cat sleeping on the windowsill. It was black, and once it sat up when it heard us, and looked at us.

I was a little nervous about what Jarelle was plan-

ning. He has these rasta dreadlocks that come down to his shoulders, and he says he wears them to show solidarity with gangsta rap. He's fourteen, but he had to stay back two grades, which means he goes to the same school I do, and he's in the same grade, except most of the time he's in suspension or detention, so it's like he's going to a different school, most of the time.

Jarelle's rasta locks stick out a lot, so he put on this cap with the stripes on it, and his head looked like a mushroom. He was getting ready to go in the house, and it scared me. I didn't want to be a chicken, but this was a house with people in it, and I never done that before.

Jarelle's breath made a cloud from it being so cold, and he slid open the door real quiet. I said, "This is dumbass, Jarelle."

He told me to shut up. Then he was inside, and he opened the refrigerator door, and so I went in too, and we took out some bread and Jarelle got a gallon of ice cream, and then I hear the steps coming down the stairs. It was like a dream, where you say, Oh, fuck, this ain't happening. And then I looked at Jarelle, and he was looking real scared. So I shut the refrigerator door.

Then this lady comes around the corner and turns on the light. I'm only telling you this because it explains what I was doing there, and how I was waiting for my mother, and Jarelle made it so that I didn't have to worry about that. That's all it was, right from the beginning. I was waiting, and she didn't come.

CHAPTER 1

Melissa Talks to Her Therapist

Recording of a session, January 30

WHAT COULD I DO, when they came right into the house? I thought about this a lot, afterwards. How much did I owe him? You know what I mean? What weird, behind-the-veil cosmic strings were dancing that night? Bringing him in? Over the ice cream. Over the path they took through the woods.

I was upstairs in bed, two in the morning, with all those papers to correct for my Chaucer class, the next morning, up at the College. Also, trying to balance my bank statement, and make a list of my financial assets, for my soon-to-be-ex-husband, Spawn of Satan. He was doing this terrible thing to me. As you know. Wanting to take Nick.

I'd just gotten the letter that the divorce hearing was scheduled for the next January. It was a letter that made your heart ache to hold it in your hand. And that night, the last of the little peeping frogs almost gone in the swamp behind the house. I was trying to figure out how much I paid for the oil bill last winter, and my laptop had slid into the crack between the bed and the wall, so that I wanted to cry, because it was such a pain to dig it out. And downstairs, I heard this distinct thud.

A human sound. Not the cat, not the creak of an old house settling its bones. I knew it was human.

We're out in the woods. That's the other thing. A dead-end road, surrounded by darkness.

My son was sleeping in his room as I tip-toed past. Breathing peacefully. The floorboards in the hall creaked. I groped for the old sponge mop in the

closet, thinking the metal end could do some damage if I had to. My heart pounding like a fist against my ribs. The Lego piece on the stairs was sharp and painful. From the kitchen, a pale light. They were talking. Quiet voices, one high as a girl's. The refrigerator light illuminated the back wall of the kitchen.

I raised the mop like a lance. "Okay, hold it right there!"

Two boys, one with a big head, a striped cap. The smaller boy hugging something like a baby. A red half-gallon package of ice cream. The bigger boy shoved the little one aside, and ran for the door. "Wait, Jarelle," the smaller boy had lost his balance. "Wait up." Plaintive, like he didn't expect his friend to wait. He sat down hard on the floor. I didn't see a knife, a gun. Nothing. The boy had one long eyebrow, I remember thinking. He was still cradling the ice cream. "Don't get me in no trouble, lady."

"Don't move," I told him, holding the mop like a bayonet. He was smaller than I thought. His sneakers were orange and worn, and they looked too big for him.

"This is my house, dammit," I said. And I dialed 911, shaky, but he just sat there. The older boy might be looking through the window, I thought. He might have a weapon. You couldn't know. So the small boy, at the end of my lance, sat on the floor next to the cat dish, and held the ice cream. We waited. He seemed about to cry. I told him if he moved I'd get him in big trouble. "Big trouble," I said. All the while I was thinking about his shoes, and where his mother was, and

why he'd come in here, if he wasn't a drug addict. If the big kid was coming back. What I must look like to him. I thought about that later.

THE EASTBOROUGH Police Station had geraniums in window boxes, and impatiens growing in cement tubs on the handicap ramp. The Garden Club is active in the town, we like the way we look. In summer the ramp has nasturtiums, and then marigolds, and then the boxes sit empty during the winter. This particular night they were freshly planted geraniums, still with that sharp odor. The patrol officer, Bob Zletz, and his partner, had driven the boy to the station in the cruiser. I followed with Nick, my son, in our car. Bob had pulled the boy to his feet in my kitchen, and said, "Long time no see." He'd given me the ice cream to put back in the freezer. "What's your name again?" Bob said to the boy. "Nothing," the kid said. Bob said they were old friends. As in, *I wish it wasn't so.*

Bob's deep blue uniform, which never had any lint on it, like his partner's, radiated enormous security in my kitchen. It must be police training, don't you think? It was a coherent world, because they were in it. Bob knew exactly what to do. Clarity. Stability. The lint, for one thing. And the language. By the time he had coaxed the kid onto his feet, my son, Nick, had come downstairs, in his battle dress uniform cammo pajamas from Wal-Mart. Nick looked at the boy, and said, "What's he doing here?"

"Hi, Nick," Bob said. "We miss you at soccer."

Seeing Nick, the boy tried to run, and Bob grabbed his arm. "Don't try that again," he said.

AT THE station house, I held the computer print-out of the complaint against the kid, for breaking into my house. I'd told them everything about the break-in, mentioned the ice cream, which seemed really petty. Tried to describe the big boy. My statements while holding the mop. Nick was sitting with the other patrol officer, getting a lesson on the new computerized tracking system they'd just bought. The boy who broke in had been taken to the bathroom, because he was sick to his stomach.

What surprised me was the boy's name: Brian Murphy. An Irish name with those dark eyes and dark skin?

"It was only ice cream," I said. "Can't we let it go?"

"I hate to tell you this," Bob said, "how many times we've seen these kids before."

The boy was out of the bathroom by then, with another officer, and the boy was crying. He wasn't as old as I'd thought. Eleven, according to the print-out. Two years older than Nick.

"Bob," I said, "this isn't really worth it. It was only ice cream."

"We're having trouble locating the mother," he said. "He's one of the kids from the Blue Moon."

Their families lived at the Blue Moon Motel. Homeless, they were stuck there by the state, because the shelters were full. A school mother had told me, while we were waiting for the kids at soccer one afternoon. "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree," she'd said. One of them had been trying to sell pot on the school bus. Another time it was smoking. The apple doesn't fall far from the tree. The Blue Moon, generic stucco thirty-year-old motel next to the highway. Fifty-nine dollars a night. Weekly rates. The blue sign with the moon outlined in neon. It might have been cute when they put it up, but it was all about Food Stamps and welfare debit cards now. "You know what they do?" the soccer mother told me. "They get their welfare cards and they take a cab into Boston to get them validated. A cab."

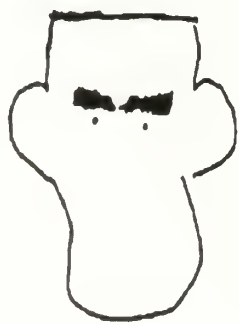
I said it was terrible.

"I don't even take cabs myself," she said. "Wish I could do that." I agreed with her. Because I was fairly new in town myself, and I wanted her to like me.

THE BOY HAD DARK circles under his eyes, and the fluorescent light overhead raked his face so that he looked very old. I didn't think he was a drug addict, but then how could I know? "We can't find his mother," Bob said. "The night desk guy can't locate her." The boy kept his eyes on the Plexiglas door. I thought he looked hungry.

MARGARITE LANDRY is an associate professor of writing at Fitchburg State College in Massachusetts. She has worked as a ghost writer, freelance writer, and editor, and has a PhD in Victorian Literature from Columbia University, and an MFA in Fiction Writing from Vermont College of Fine Arts. During the past year, in addition to winning the James Jones First Novel Fellowship, Landry was runner up in the Tobias Wolff Award in Fiction, was in the top 25 of the Glimmer Train Fiction Open, and had short stories published in the *Pisgah Review* and the *Bellingham Review*. She lives in Massachusetts with her husband, artist Joe Landry, and son.

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The Kingdom of Ordinary Time

By Marie Howe

Norton, 2008

William Blake's lines "And we are put on earth a little space / That we may learn to bear the beams of love," would serve as an apt epigraph for Marie Howe's third book of poetry, *The Kingdom of Ordinary Time*, in which she continues to reckon with the question of how to bear human and divine love. Speaking in the voice of Mary, she writes:

I was blinded like that—and swam
in what shone at me

only able to endure it by being no one
and so
specifically myself I thought I'd die
from being loved like that.

A collection of thirty-seven lyrics, the poems are loosely centered around the question of our place in the sacred and quotidian order of things. These poems explore everything from errands, to reading Ovid, to the human capacity for violence. In one of her compelling poems, the speaker in "The World" reflects on everyday experience with wise candor:

I've lived on this earth so long—50 winters,
50 springs and summers,
and all this time stars in the sky—in daylight

when I couldn't see them, and at night when, most
nights, I didn't look.

At times, she brings a sly humor to weighty aspects of human nature. "After the Movie" opens:

My friend Michael and I are walking home
arguing about the movie.
He says that he believes a person can love someone
and still be able to murder that person.

I say, No, that's not love. That's attachment.

A witnessing eye is turned on the speaker herself or, at other times, turns outward, toward others. "Easter" vividly imagines the moment when Jesus re-inhabited his earthly body:

And the whole body was too small. Imagine
the sky trying to fit into a tunnel carved into a hill.

He came into it two ways:
From the outside, as we step into a pair of pants.

And from the center—suddenly all at once.
Then he felt himself awake in the dark alone.

Howe incorporates dialogue and has a gift for capturing ordinary, idiosyncratic speech in her work. With rhetorical playfulness, many of these poems seek to engage the reader with a question; some

THE KINGDOM OF ORDINARY TIME

POEMS



MARIE HOWE

poems are built on a litany of questions. With wry, philosophical self-observation, Howe touches on old stories—biblical, mythological—to examine human foibles: "And because rage makes for more rage—nothing to do then but run. And because rage is a story that has // no ending, we'd both have to transform into birds or fish: constellations forever fixed in the starry heavens, forever separated, forever attached." Ovid's mythical metamorphoses point to the timelessness of human cruelty without sounding pedantic.

Similarly, a poem titled "Government" animates the "kingdom" of the self with soldiers who talk and argue. It begins: "Standing next to my old friend I sense that his soldiers have retreated. / And mine? They're resting their guns on their shoulders / talking quietly." Such poems acknowledge the persistence of animosity within us. A trivial encounter in the "Health and Harmony Food Store" extends the metaphor of self as kingdom—inner life mirroring outer, political life:

So many kingdoms,
and in each kingdom, so many people: the
disinherited son, the corrupt
counselor,
the courtesan, the fool.
And so many gods—arguing among themselves,
over toast, through the lunch salad
and on into the long hours of the mild spring
afternoon—I'm the god.
No, I'm the god. No, I'm the god.

Howe's first volume of poems, *The Good Thief*, was selected by Margaret Atwood for the National Poetry Series in 1987. Some themes from

that collection—Mary, Eve, childhood memories, and both domestic and political violence—continue in her new collection; childhood memories appear in "Tree Fort" and in a prose poem, "Non-violence," which begins: "Some nights, long after we'd gone to sleep, our drunk father would wake us all up and order us to clean the kitchen." The book's final poem, "Mary: (Reprise)," however, suggests that Howe is coming to terms with her focus—obsession even—with the past and is casting it off: "Let it be done to me, Mary finally said, and that // was the last time, for a long time, that she spoke about the past."

As in her first collection and her second, *What the Living Do*, Howe's latest poems favor couplets that contain an inner or outer dialogue, and often an enjambed, loose syntax. A poem such as "Limbo" speaks with an emphatic, assured quality through end-stopped lines, and the white space between them:

Each of them can't decide if there is a God
or if there is a self.

Do I have an I? one says
to another who seems distracted, looking out
what might have been a window.

At times her poems build a pleasurable rhythm with anaphora and parallelism, "And he says . . . / And I say" (in "Courage"). "In the Course of the Last Three Days" builds its rhythm in the third and final stanza:

One of us touched her foot
One of us touched her shoulder
One of us tried to pull off her rings.
One of us tried to close her mouth

Howe favors a natural, lilting syntax, as if talking to us on line at a store, deftly drawing us into the unexpected amidst daily errands: "Jesus must have been a saint, I said to myself, looking for my lost car / in the parking lot." Long-lined and plainspoken, at their best, Howe's poems express a clear, transcendent contact with the physical world that is reminiscent of Jane Kenyon. Among the many stirring moments in the book are these from "The Snow Storm":

I put my hand down into the deer track
and touched the bottom of an invisible hoof.
Then my finger in the little mark of the jay.

The sequence "Poems from the Life of Mary" contains five poems whose twelve- or fourteen-line length, and rough rhyme scheme, echo sonnets.

Among the most powerful poems in the collection, to my ear, they move with precise music:

How you can't move moonlight—you have to go
there and stand in it. How you can't coax it
from your bed to come and shine there. You can't
carry it in a bucket or cup it in
your hands to drink. Wind won't

blow it. A bird flying through it won't
tear it. How you can't sell it or buy it

There's modesty in her style, and her choice of forms, that serve each poem's central concern. Mary is given the sonnet; a witty modern dialogue uses couplets; other poems such as "Non-violence" and "What We Would Give Up" are more narrative and have a ranging prose poem style. While the language itself in this collection does not seek to break new linguistic ground, the voice persuades us with its simple grace and originality, particularly when self-questioning. Set a Marie Howe poem among a dozen other contemporary poems, and you can

recognize the voice. Even when she speaks in the voice of Mary, even as she acknowledges her mother's voice embedded in her speech—Howe's voice is very much her own.

SOPHIE WADSWORTH's first collection of poems, *Letters from Siberia*, was awarded the 2004 Jessie Bryce Niles Chapbook Award. She has taught writing at the University of Massachusetts, Lowell, and Harvard Medical School and serves as an editor for *Wild Apples*, a literary and visual arts journal.

Two Minutes of Light

By Nancy K. Pearson

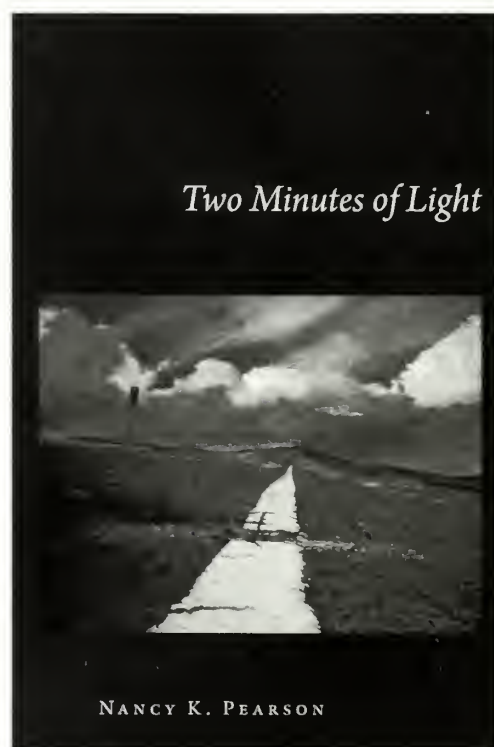
Perugia Press, 2008

Seeds float and spark through the poems of Nancy K. Pearson's first collection, a powerful exploration of trauma, addiction, and the painstaking assemblage of an inhabitable life. Milkweed drifts across an empty soccer field; "a pod of jewelweed explodes / under the slightest disturbance." Acorns drop on the roof of a trailer. A father picks peas "in the star-sprouted evening," and a meteor shower over Appalachia is "one million seeds [. . .] in a field of strawberries." But this is no idyllic world. The small girl listening in the trailer has one leg trapped beneath a man whose heart drums in terrible counterpoint. The grown woman watching the jewelweed is jobless, drinking vodka in the bright morning. The seeds bristle with the twin possibilities of life or disaster, and these poems are intensely aware of the missteps, choices, and chance winds that govern human potential.

Two Minutes of Light is moving, generous, and beautifully wrought. The collection won the 2008 Perugia Press Prize, and, this spring, also received the 2009 L. L. Winship/PEN New England Award, an honor previously shared by such poets as Stanley Kunitz, Mary Oliver, and Louise Glück. Pearson, a Tennessee native now living on Cape Cod, has twice held winter Fellowships at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown.

Though the book travels through harrowing realms—alcohol and drug addiction, depression, abuse, self-mutilation, suicide—Pearson's voice is distinguished by a quiet gravity. The book, while it focuses on a deeply personal evolution, does not have the claustrophobia of self-absorption. It is, in fact, spacious, curious, with a porous sensibility akin to joy, and brimming with wind and light, sea tides, fleas, dogs, neighbors—the world in all its mess and sense and wonderful strangeness. Even in the most visceral poems of addiction, such as the six-part "On the Motel-by-the-Hour," the litany of despair is braced against the poet's relentless, self-compassion.

Some poems that cast farther back, the glimpses of childhood trauma are more oblique. In "Skimmers," for example, a young girl is taken into woods where



she is deeply betrayed. The voice here has a chilling simplicity, the matter-of-factness of childhood: "I tell him I am falling. / He tells me I am walking / in the woods." But before the moment of harm, the language grows gently strange, the trees almost protectively animated:

The firs

at the pond know when
to free their leaves: lie down
under here, love.

Here is a teeth grove.

What is unbearable is allowed to shimmer.

Pearson's lines fall easily on the page and in the voice, their breaks and hinges and echoes both complex and unobtrusive, like the bones inside a body's motion. She is wonderfully adept at the kind of compressed language that conjures without naming. The opening poem, "Cyclic," gives us this skittering dance:

The fiddler crabs are barn-raising
their sink holes in the sand.
All morning, the leggy low tide calls
allemandes left and right.

The book's whole structure has this dance-like quality—one step forward, two steps back—in which poems link elbows, images leap forward or tug back to future or past. Interestingly, this seems to enact both the associative, intuitive quality of memory as it gathers and sifts, and the trials and errors, hopes and "heartbreaking / miscalculations" that characterize the path from despair to wholeness. Midway, the steps reverse—two steps forward, one step back—and the book begins to shift. "The Halfway-to-Hell Club," an anguished poem imagining suicide's collateral damage, gives way to "Halfway to Flight," in which the speaker weeds an iris bed. Lost in the sad internal accounting of a decade's disasters, the poem suddenly opens into wonder:

still, my heart goes on dividing

its twisted yarn of blood.

The valves sing: knot here, snip there.

Cut from the soil, an iris aches like a bone.

I plant it in the yard, my single green wing.

There are also dog-walking, and cooking, and wood-piling poems, and with the details of daily labor and contentment, the second half of the collection grows in earthliness, connection, radiance, and love. Again, there is no straight chronology: we're still hooked back into the past by "this gap between knowing / and what to do with knowing." The poems test, and increasingly trust, that the world will hold. And in this way they wring from private suffering this other thing, a force of attention that renders the world—milkweed seed, fir leaf, the beloved's tender elbow—in all its sober beauty.

PILAR GÓMEZ-IBÁÑEZ is a poet living in Wisconsin. In 2007–2008 she was a writing Fellow at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown.

At the Barriers: On the Poetry of Thom Gunn

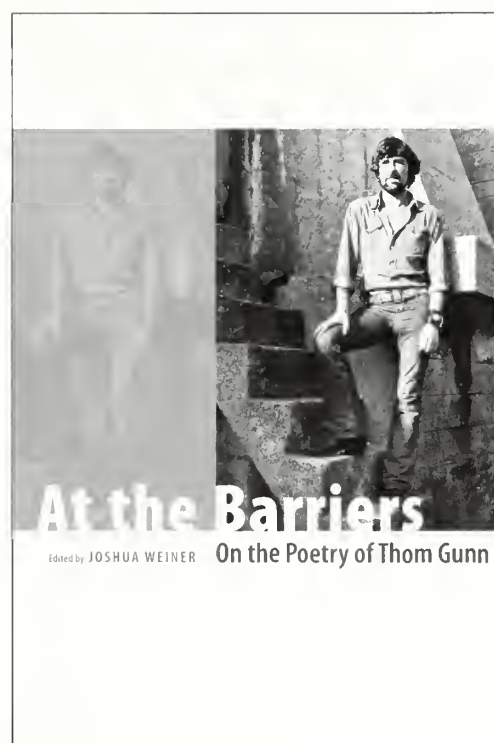
Edited by Joshua Weiner

The University of Chicago Press, 2009

Perhaps more than any other literary genre, poetry asks of its practitioners to contemplate past influences and structures even as it hungers for something new. At a recent panel called *Critical Contexts*, hosted by the Poetry Society of America and the Woodberry Poetry Room at Harvard, issues of looking back and reaching forward were very much on the minds of critics Stephen Burt, Adam Kirsch, and Maureen McLane as they surveyed contemporary poetics. As the evening progressed, I kept thinking about poet Thom Gunn as an exemplar of past traditions and new trails. His work masterfully fuses poetic tradition, individual will, and sociosexual context in lyrics of earthy aspiration. Gunn, a British expat who settled in San Francisco and whose career spanned both pre- and post-Stonewall eras, published a rich body of work from 1954 to 2000. To help us frame Gunn's work, to read it more clearly and take it to heart, we now have Joshua Weiner's superbly edited collection of essays, *At the Barriers*.

In parsing out maps to guide us through Gunn's work, the essays admirably mix line-by-line readings that emphasize musical and syntactical concerns with thematic explorations of community and sexuality that shape Gunn's individual change and growth. As critic Stephen Burt puts it, poems are persons having and trying to make sense of experience. Most appealing about Weiner's collection is the *personable* nature of its thinking: academically pithy and wise, it's scholarship that's heartfelt, intellectually rigorous, yet rarely wandering into academic lexicons that might alienate a wider readership. Weiner's cross-circuit of essays, from Paul Muldoon's close reading of "Considering the Snail" to David Gewanter's take on urbanity at the heart of Gunn's poems, nicely balances particulars and the larger abstractions they foment.

Burt likens critical work to that of a cat that surveys the yard, finds a bird, brings it inside, and says *look what I found*. Not wishing to kill the poetry as the cat does the bird, the critic makes an offering of what's found in the poetic terrain, asks us to spend some time with it, and, in un-catlike fashion, lets us know the how and why of what works. In a witty retort to Burt's cat trope, Adam Kirsch added that part of the critic's job is to play Pit Bull: to head off intruders who don't belong on the property. But the idea of "belonging"—in a critical canon and in a larger sociological perspective—takes on new meaning when we look at Gunn's contexts. Gunn's earlier work features the heroic poses of toughs and soldiers and a more ambiguously coded sexuality. His later work, blending the influence of American Moderns and Robert Duncan's mesh of Modern and Romantic, begins to openly embrace gay culture, its pleasures, its communal joys, and, later, its pandemic tragedy. Paralleling these shifts in content and range, Gunn's musical shifts over time—from accentual-syllabic meter (Eavan Boland wonderfully



characterizes his "abrasive vernacular behind a musical pentameter") to syllabics to free verse—yield a complex range of expression whose belt is neither so tight that it strains our breath under formal restrictions nor too capacious in hyperbolized, Whitmanesque fashion. Equally multifaceted in its tones—by turns darkly grounded and by turns optimistic, even humorous—Gunn's "Romantic searching," notes Weiner, is tempered by the poet's gently challenging skepticism. The latter allows for a voice more "humane, direct, candid, unself-conscious, personal, and apparently, objective."

About barriers—the collection takes its title from a Gunn poem that considers the confines of a city fair—"physical, psychological, aesthetic, social," Weiner writes, "they combine in the space where personal and political life find dramatic expression." Gunn's work loves to work at the barriers, recognizing that any kind of boundary is both inclusive and exclusive, forcing us to stay our presence and attention so that what limits us might also be the sight of our expansion, whether we're talking about poetic forms or sexuality or citizenship. As Eavan Boland notes, "Few poets in our time have been as deeply nourished by tradition and as lovingly open to change." The word *range* seems seminal when discussing Gunn's work: it suggests landscape and activity, a scope of territory to traverse and the traversing itself. When Alfred Corn writes, ostensibly about Heidegger's influence on existentialism and existentialism's effects on Gunn, that "the human task is then to alter or transform given conditions by choice until we arrive at an existence compatible with our deepest identity," he aptly sums up Gunn's career-long dance with continuity and change.

What will you find inside? Essays on Gunn's early work from Eavan Boland and Neil Powell—I particularly liked Powell's focus on divided selves

in early poems such as "The Looking Glass" and "The Secret Sharer." A fascinating look at existentialism and homosexuality from Alfred Corn, and Clive Wilmer's wonderful exploration of Gunn's links to Shakespeare, Campion, and Jonson that yield distinct American portraits with Elizabethan flavor. Also, August Kleinzahler's salty, no-nonsense appreciation of Gunn's Baudelarian embrace of what's urban, an essay that dovetails with David Gewanter's contribution. Wendy Lesser insightfully explores Gunn's penchant for literary and sexual allusions that subtly enrich the fabric of his lyrics. Tom Sleigh's taut and sharp exploration of the counterculture scene that Gunn cruised segues into a wonderful vision of an idealism that, far from frivolous or rose-colored, is tempered by a skeptical intelligence and hesitation about how far we can carry such idealism. For Sleigh and the rest of us, Gunn's Virgilian efforts—he's a participant who takes on a bit of disinterested distance to show us the ropes—present "the way boundaries of experience fall away and then reassert themselves." As Gunn's poems explore and these essays magnify, such boundaries are where we most thoroughly and presently live our lives.

Particularly noteworthy is Brian Teare's generous exploration of Gunn's progression during a period of massive social turbulence—pre- and post-Stonewall—for the gay community. A remarkable personal appreciation wedded to social commentary, Teare's essay helped me revise my inherited sense of influence—how one poet takes from the past and moves ahead into the future. In discussing Gunn's mentoring from diametrically opposed teachers in Yvor Winters and Robert Duncan, Teare models Gunn's relationship with Duncan as reciprocal, nurturing, and collaborative, a positive counter to Harold Bloom's sense of influence rife with anxiety and the concomitant sense that one's task is to rival the past and one-up one's predecessors. A revised tradition and community emerge out of inherited (hetero) sexual and critical realms that Duncan and Gunn both sought to remake for themselves.

Joshua Weiner's own inclusions point to his humility and talent, highlighting this collection's labor of love. He tackles "Misanthropos," a poem he admits he wasn't initially able to fully grasp, and brings it to clear and generous light, and his juxtaposition of two versions of Gunn's poem "Meat" offers a deft reading of music and syntax while celebrating the genesis of a poem that counters prevailing historical notions of changing poetic forms—"Meat" is a poem that becomes *more* formal over time.

Gunn's work tends to inhabit and elicit a host of binary situations and perspectives: inner/outer, rooted/experimental, formal/colloquial, the club-cruising and drug-taking hedonist/the mannered, conscientious scholar. This collection helps readers embrace the binaries, celebrate their rich range, eschew easy oppositions, and ultimately presents Gunn's work as a cocktail of unified and necessary poetic tensions. As Robert Pinsky eloquently surmises in his coda, Gunn's "all-of-the-above" quality, and his "many-mindedness" in which "sympathy or one-ness prevails over polarities of judgment or detachment" yields poems that charitably display a "cool understanding of one's

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own heated imperfections." Gunn's poetry inhabits the formal and thematic edges of our central tensions, our living and loving and communicating in our short earthly stints:

we stretch our sympathies, this is a day of feeling
with,
we circulate, we greet our friends, converse in
groups,
the competitive spirit is stifled;
in small beginnings our varied loves are based.

As with the speaker's fair experience in *At the Barriers*, one reads Gunn's work and finds a "feeling with," encounters an arc of work that shifts and changes and delights over the course of an adult life.

Long Division

By Andrea Cohen
Salmon Press, Ireland, 2009

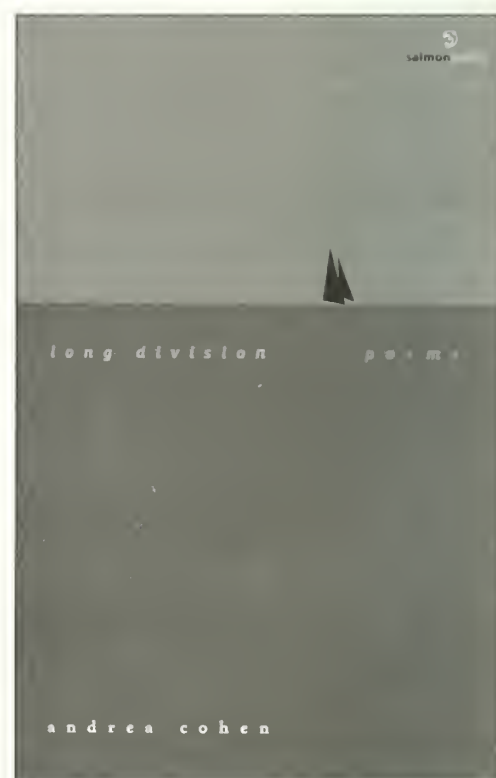
"Why I Am a Ventriloquist," a poem in her collection *Long Division*, could double as a disquisition on Andrea Cohen's offbeat idiom. The eponymous persona, "no good with numbers" yet given to enumeration, both acknowledges occupational challenges—in lion rings, hat departments, tollbooths, and burning buildings—and comically rejects them. Gravitas and buffoonery collide as well in improbably juxtaposed couplets, linked through playful repetitions that click-clack down the poem like blocks in a flipping Jacob's ladder. Its final line sums up not only the speaker's technique but also the poet's craft, a projection of quirky imagination and unique vocal sound: "and remotely, my voice sings." As Tom Sleight writes in a cover blurb for *Long Division*, Cohen is among "a handful of poets who can make her voice a conscious echo of her mind."

Ventriloquism (Latin for "speaking from the belly") propels Cohen's new book, driven by unconventional narrators whose verbal jujitsu surpasses that of characters from her award-winning volume, *The Cartographer's Vacation* (Owl Creek, 1999). Having traded antic for ironic sensibility, they tweak stories lifted from life or myth, notably declaimed in workplace dispatches. Persephone holds a "subterranean and thankless" job counting steelheads. Emily Post determines proper etiquette for entertaining "unannounced" foreign invaders. Star of a three-part series, "Detective X Captures Pygmalion." Joining their protean choir, the meta-voice that contemplates literary vocation in "A Funny Thing Happened to Andrea Cohen in the City" honors the force of guild elders, including O'Hara (her ventriloquist winks at "Why I Am Not a Painter"), Bidart, Pinsky, Mazur, and Glück. But make no mistake: Cohen, who writes daily if only in short bursts, stays closely tuned to her own voice and trademark singularity.

A Surrealist by inclination, her composing process frequently approximates Surrealist, found-object assemblage. A fleeting image, such as that of someone

One finds in these essays a compilation of "varied loves" that help further Gunn's idealistic-yet-grounded notions of how we all might better aspire to full and loving expressions of individuality and communal presence. I could not embrace Gunn's work as fully if it were not for this deeply moving tribute that serves as a model of literary criticism: it helps us love more intelligently.

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strolling through an antique emporium ("As Is") or gardening under strange circumstances ("Title Search"), may set a poem in motion, touching off an associative litany that crescendos into a page or longer of single-spaced lines. This strategy operates evocatively in the elegiac "Worldly Things for Danny B.," modulated by clarity of setting and subject matter as a child's grave ("en plein air / domain of the boy / dead at four") leads the speaker to ponder "Afterlife as life" by envisioning capricious, seemingly everlasting family visits to his "green slope / of Elysium Path." Other times, Cohen exacts lyric compression, exercised in smaller, less-dense poems, well suited to expressing the poet's wonder at the natural world or fascination with ordinary objects.

Deckle-edged couplets direct her delightful "To an Ant Fallen in a Salt Shaker," the book's opener, in which a self-assured "I" asserts the philosophical problem of desire, indicative of the collection's overall tone:

I too have mistaken it
for sugar: the bright blizzards

are similarly blinding, inviting,
and once you have

an ache for nectar,
turning back is hard.

Positioned further in the volume, the skewed idyll "In a Haystack," a Carmen figuration (*carmina figurata*, i.e., "shaped poetry" visually arrayed to form recognizable figures and objects), looks positively hypodermic. It begins in speculation: "A needle must feel / deeply needled, ill- / suited to its skin," a proposition furthered via a long, skinny sentence, followed by a four-word, one-line volta ("A needle like that?") then concluded with dropper-sized resolve. Sonic fluidity similarly combines with spatial brevity in wry, antonymic odes like "Fill" and "Slot Canyon," in which sparse, narrow lines slink straight down, slipperiness as quicksand. Lyrical leaping and canny shaping also unify "Fun House," its retrospective narrator recollecting her pubescent self as lost in a hall of mirrors: "stuck / with the fat and skinny / images of me: feast / and famine overlapping."

Cohen's well-honed ventriloquist act as disciplined by writing regularity harkens back to her youth, when she was forced in seventh grade to memorize a poem per week. (In a recent trip back to Atlanta, Georgia, she thanked the teacher.) While English class gets no mention in *Long Division*, two schoolroom poems do appear. An homage to James Tate's "Five Years Old" that mischievously swipes its epiphany ("so much did I worship her"), the embedded-title poem, "Terrible in Math," concerns a pinafore-clad sixth-grader, who renounces the scourge of long division by climbing atop a bookcase. It is followed by "Social Studies," which describes a child constructing a geography project at the epicenter of an eccentric family, including a mother who "circled the homework / with a sweet Rob Roy," and a father who "kneeled with bifocals, / double-checking for structural errors." While autobiography informs several selections, Cohen avoids the confessional mode. Instead, dispersed throughout like mementos from a time capsule, generational references to her own ("Father Takes Us for the Ideal Day") and her parents' and grandparents' formative days ("Apology," "Fashion and Poise," Gina Lollobrigida's cameo in "The Beauty of Youth") summon the fading halcyon of twentieth-century America.

The wistful, name-dropping "Love Poem with Trash Compactor" is set in 1970 against a backdrop of "denim bell bottoms," "root beer and sarsaparilla," and "free love," a time when a "Tom Jones special" clashed against a garbage collector, "who leapt like Fred Astaire's younger, dumpy brother / from the back of the trash truck." An irreverent address "To the 20th Reunion Planning Committee" seems willfully disconnected from Cohen's personal history, cleverly implying "little to do / with [her] formal training / as [a poetic] acrobat." But indeed, in the decades immediately after high school, she graduated from Tufts as a rising poet, entered the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop as a twenty-one-year-old

wunderkind and Teaching Writing Fellow (MFA 1985), launched a career as a marine writer at MIT, and inherited stewardship of the prestigious Blacksmith House Reading Series, which she continues to direct in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Also during this period she kept up steady publication of poetry, stories, and essays in leading journals, including *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Threepenny Review*, *The Iowa Review*, and *Ploughshares*. Other honors include a PEN Discovery Award, *Glimmer Train's* Short Fiction Award, and regular stints at the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire.

Having dwelled near southern savannahs and midwestern prairies, Cohen now divides her time between eastern seaboard locales, whose names—Watertown and Provincetown—sound somehow ordained. Owing to her livelihood (she is also an avid swimmer), oceanic mysteries course through her verses. *Long Division* brims with watery allusions, treated as manifestly of the physical world but also as divinely elemental and unseen. This sometimes twofold condition is elegantly revealed in less than fifty words in the beautiful "Underground Stream," and likewise checked in "Parts Per Million," which shakes up an old chestnut: "The body is ninety / percent water, ninety / percent thirst." A reminder that even the ancients prized bodily and spiritual communion with water, the epigram "Narcissus on Property" reads in entirety: "I too / had a waterview." Extending the conceit in contemplation of "limbo" status—between fish and bird, water and air—the personified speaker of "Flying Fish: Call and Discernment" works through this ontological conundrum as if attempting to solve a mathematical equation: "Even submerged I am out / of my element, which I fear / the Lord in his haste / forgot to invent."

Elsewhere in the volume, an oddball sensibility seems keen to rescue oftentimes diffident vessels from fraught, seafaring voyages ("Dr. Coolidge Goes to Sea," "Antiboat," "Slow, Boat," "Ferry: Somewhere Between Boston and Yarmouth"). A shipwreck victim in "What Would You Like on Your Desert Island?" admits the title's quandary "could be a trick question, / requiring a trick response." Island isolation also animates the lyrically reductive "Alcatraz," a five-line prose poem in the voice of a solitary convict, having forsaken escape and resigned to survival in a cell "black and cold, like a shoe box exiled to / Siberia."

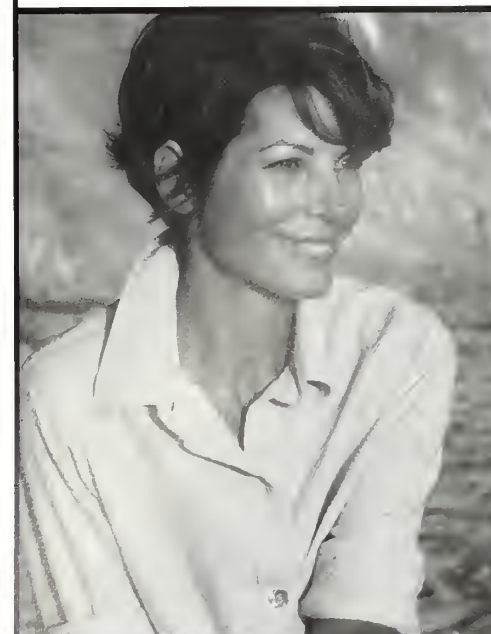
Everywhere on display in her work, Cohen's wacky yet joyful affair with language is overtly revealed in "Ode to the Alphabet," apostrophe to a "balletic corps" ever "prepared to leap in myriad permutations." Arranging these letters of "eternal possibility" with vividness and virtuosity, in *Long Division*, Andrea Cohen reinvents the world's humor and heartbreak, offering up extraordinary poems.

Author of *Sand & Traffic* (poetry), PAULINE UCHMANOWICZ's poems and essays have appeared in many journals, including *Ploughshares*, *Crazyhorse*, *Ohio Review*, and *Z Magazine*. An arts-and-culture journalist in the Hudson Valley, she is series editor of the *Codhill Poetry Chapbook Award* and associate professor of English at the State University of New York.



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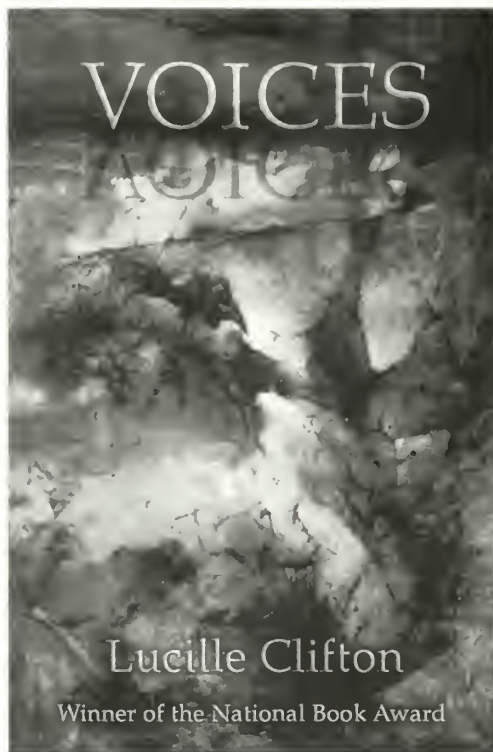
Voices

By Lucille Clifton

BOA Editions, 2008

One of the things that it means to be American is that you are a part of a culture that is marked by its racial history, sometimes defined by that history. The press of history imprints everything this week of Barack Obama's inauguration as I, a white American woman, sit writing this review of the latest book from an iconic African-American figure of late-twentieth-century (and now early-twenty-first-century) American poetry. I can feel the ground shift underneath those cultural tags—African-American, white, American—even as I write them. The parameters of those definitions are altering in ways we have yet to map. I would contend that through her persistent and insightful interrogation of the mythology of the American dream, Lucille Clifton is one of the people who has both critiqued and renewed that dream, and thus helped to prepare us as a culture for many of the changes that Barack Obama represents.

Lucille Clifton's career was launched in the late 1960s, part of the group of voices that came to prominence on the cresting wave of the civil rights movement, a group that included LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka), Sonia Sanchez, and Robert Hayden. Race and gender consciousness have always been important to her work, and from the sixties up through the present, Clifton has been an important



chronicler of the persistence of hope and optimism in the face of oppression, particularly the forms of oppression that affect women and people of color.

In a *Newsweek* interview back in 1987, Toni Morrison said of her own work: "I don't try to translate for white readers. . . . Dostoevsky wrote for a Russian audience, but we're able to read him. If I'm specific, and I don't over explain, then anybody can overhear me." The comment explains to me my own way into Clifton's work. Such as when, in an earlier book, she writes her "homage to my hips" or expresses her "wishes for sons":

i wish them cramps.
i wish them a strange town
and the last tampon.
i wish them no 7-11.

i wish them one week early
and wearing a white skirt.
i wish them one week late.

I feel directly spoken to. Any reader "overhears" any writer imperfectly or incompletely at times, but Clifton's specificity and understatement have for decades made her work an important site of connection for a wide audience.

Clifton is known for poems in which the vocabulary is direct, one could say simple, while the thought processes are complex. Her poems are simple in the strong sense of any elegant design. Because of her spare lines and her poetic stance that seems most often to fall somewhere between meditation and storytelling, Clifton has been described as an inheritor of Emily Dickinson, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Langston Hughes; while there is truth in that, it seems to me that Clifton's style owes as much to the exigencies of her life as it does to any poetic forebears. Clifton came into her own voice at a time when she was the mother of six children under the age of ten.

Of necessity, she said in an interview in 2007, she learned to write the early drafts of poems in her head as she tended to diapers and dinners, only committing to paper once the poem was already well begun, never writing in long hand, always recording directly on what she refers to as "the machine"—whether typewriter or computer. A characteristic Clifton poem now is spare and sinewy—a deft sketch without any embellishments, not even punctuation or capitalization, only line breaks and the occasional extra space to score breath and thought. Anyone who thinks this is an easy way to write has never tried it. The lines are worked, as a brook works stones. Muscular and economical.

The grace and power of this style explains why Clifton's new and selected volume of work, *Blessing the Boats* (BOA Editions, 2000), was awarded the National Book Award; why her *The Terrible Stories* (1995) was nominated for the National Book Award; and why both *Good Woman: Poems and a Memoir* (1987) and *Two-Headed Woman* (1980) were nominated for the Pulitzer. Clifton's other honors include an Emmy from the American Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, a Lannan Literary Award, two fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Shelley Memorial Award, the YM-YWCA Poetry Center Discovery Award, and the 2007 Ruth Lilly Prize. Clifton is the first black woman to receive the Lilly Prize, a distinguished award that recognizes a lifetime of achievement. She has served as Poet Laureate of Maryland and in 1999 was elected a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets.

Book after book, how does she keep so minimal a style fresh, keep from repeating herself, from caricaturing her own style? One strategy, as the title of this newest volume suggests, is for the poet to continually rejuvenate the form through an interest in voices other than just her own. *Voices* is divided into three sections: "hearing," "being heard," and "ten ox-herding pictures." Roughly, the first section collects the poems of listening, the second of speaking, and the third is a kind of ekphrastic sequence. An endnote tells us that the ten ox-herding pictures are an allegorical series composed by a twelfth-century Zen master as a training guide for Chinese Buddhist monks. Clifton tells us she wrote the poems knowing only the ten titles of the pictures.

That description of her method with the ox-herding picture poems seems to me an accurate aesthetic statement on Clifton's method in general: her wide curiosity about the world refreshes her poems, but the world enters the poems through the filter of Clifton's own imagination. The "hearing" poems collected in her first section bring us the voices of Aunt Jemima, Uncle Ben, the man from the Cream of Wheat box, Horse, Dog, Raccoon (I capitalize the names of the animals, as she did not, to indicate that the animal voices in these poems are a kind of "voice of the species" rather than the voice of an individual of that species), Mataoka (which Clifton tells us was Pocahontas's actual name), and others. Unlike the chilling persona poems of Ai, or Patricia Smith's "Skinhead," where a consciousness not seen in the other poems of that collection seems to aggress-

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sively take over the page, Clifton's "voices" all appear to share her own quietly subversive and resilient attitude. The cultural icons, historical figures, and animal representatives are economical metaphors for Clifton's own meditations on her times.

Both the poems written out of the experiences of her own life, and the poems that engage American history and culture participate in the critique of American mythology. This is true in general about Clifton's oeuvre and true in this latest volume for the poems in both of the first two sections. Poems such as "in amir's room," "afterblues," "my grandfather's lullaby," or "albino" give us both the seemingly ineradicable discriminations of color ("the dark world still / smug still visible / among the stars") and the flecks of hope in that darkness, for which I offer "albino" in its entirety:

we sat
in the stalled
car
watching him
watch us
his great pink
antlers
branched
his pink eyes
fixed
on the joy
of the black woman
and the white one

laughing together
and he smiled
at the sometime
wonderfulness
of other

Clifton gives a poem each to Uncle Ben, Aunt Jemima, and the man from Cream of Wheat. This last tells us he read in an old paper that his name is Rastus but he insists that's no name a mother ever gave him and so he remains nameless, "personless," lagging behind Ben and Jemima as they stroll the darkened grocery aisles at night. These poems are some of my favorites in the book, at the same time that they strike me as a bit behind the times. Clifton has done her usual deft and pointed sketch, but in my mind's eye I am picturing the figures in the dusky aisles of the Acme's of my childhood, not the gleaming 24-hour supermarts of today. Clifton's has been an important voice in moving us in this direction, but as the Obamas on my TV screen twirl to strains of the Etta James classic "At Last" at inaugural ball after inaugural ball, I see online at the company Web site that Uncle Ben has been named "chairman" and he's trying out the virtual office the revisionists have provided him with, complete with leather chair, paneled walls, sleek flat-screen computer monitor, and his own beaming portrait. I don't mean to suggest that this revision needs no critique; only that Clifton's poem hasn't reached there yet.

Lucille Clifton was born in 1936. Like anyone in their eighth decade, the dead are as present to her as the living—her parents, her son, grandfather, grandmother, the songwriters (such as Bob Marley or Marvin Gaye) whose song lyrics run in her head—but Clifton persists, persists, in engaging the world as she finds it. In tribute to that persistence, I'd like to close with the final poem in the "being heard" section, "highway 89 toward tahoe":

a congregation
of red rocks
sits at attention
watching the water
the trees among them
rustle hosanna
hosanna
something stalls the rental car
something moves us
something in the river
Christ
rowing for our lives

CHRISTINE GELINEAU is the author of *Remorseless Loyalty* and the forthcoming book-length poetry sequence *Appetite for the Divine* (Ashland Poetry Press, scheduled for 2010); her poetry, essays, and reviews have appeared widely. Gelineau is associate director of the Creative Writing Program at Binghamton University and also teaches in the Wilkes University low-residency MA/MFA program.

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To the Life of the Silver Harbor

By Reuel K. Wilson

University Press of New England, 2008

Reuel K. Wilson was born on Christmas Day, 1938. His father, Edmund Wilson, at the time forty-three, was seventeen years older than Reuel's mother, Mary McCarthy. The literary world well knows that the Wilson marriage was not, as we say, happy, but it was certainly lively. Happy marriages may be for Norman Rockwell.

As the son of two people who were fiercely honest in their work, Reuel proves to be a chip off the old block. It is a finely written book. It's an affection-

ate but vivid account of what it was like to be the son of two celebrated literary figures, and along the way gives us glimpses of what Wellfleet used to be like when Rex, the family dog, could take a snooze on Route 6 and not be disturbed because traffic was so thin. Understand, please, this book is not a "Mommy Dearest." Its title comes from lines lifted from a romantic poem Wilson wrote McCarthy, she of the "green and lighting eyes," and it may also be considered a play on words of his famous father's classic, *To the Finland Station*.

I say, "famous father" because Wilson, although not a popular writer (save for the one-shot *Memoirs of Hecate County*) is famous to those of us who have long been taken by his scholarship, his casual, seemingly effortless style that holds so much, his wide-ranging interests and his wide-ranging foraging into the arts—historian, poet, novelist, and, most tellingly, literary critic. He was a true man of letters. He knew F. Scott Fitzgerald at Princeton and was one of the first champions of Hemingway. He seemed to know everything and everybody that counted. You might wish he had been your father—or a surrogate one—and that may have been in part what his young wife, Mary McCarthy, had wanted. Whatever she had wanted, though, she got temper tantrums, boorish behavior, and, once in awhile, a slap or two. Not that she was perfect. Picture-book lovely, a bewitching mischievous smile, curvy figure, a fierce intelligent and creative mind, she couldn't resist flings on the outside. I'm not telling secrets. It's in the book. She had a tryst or two with handsome, suave Ralph Manheim, the esteemed translator of Brecht, Celine, and the first translator of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*—and had to have an abortion, not knowing for certain if the cause for it lay with Manheim or Wilson. Wilson, a caregiver when he had to be and quick to take charge when others might dither, saw her through recovery. He was tough and surprisingly clear-headed in a crisis. Around this time, he wrote her a poem on her thirtieth birthday citing her "green and lighting eyes" and how much she meant to him. She got more than a father in Wilson then. She got a lover, too.

As the only son of this notable, volatile couple, Reuel emerges pretty much unscathed. He goes to the best prep schools, Brooks for one, and through Harvard. (It never ceases to amaze that the high-born, often reduced to penury and tax liens, always seem able to send their children to the finest and most traditional seats of learning.) Reuel ends up teaching Russian, Polish, and Comparative Literature (he inherited his father's gift for languages) in Canada and has become a fine writer in his own right. He doesn't shy away from revelations about his parents' sexual antics and errant behavior. He is not burdened, as his parents were not burdened, with a severe censor hovering over his shoulder, telling him what to say and what not. Like any serious writer worth his salt, it is the truth that he's after, no holds barred.

Every day Edmund Wilson worked between mid-morning and mid-afternoon. Then he drank a half bottle of Johnny Walker Red before dinner and a half bottle afterward. It's in the book. Of course we've known some of the anecdotes about



the couple already and the wide parameters of their story. But this, in large part, is an inside story that only Reuel can tell. He tells of the bedtime stories told him. He talks of the car rides with his mother and how his father would quiz him on what he had learned from a recent study almost like an exam. Such information can only come from Reuel, and he is willing, like his parents, to lay the facts on the line.

We learn about Reuel's boyhood life back then. He was not a pale bookworm holed up in a corner. By his account he was a rather high-energy, mischievous lad, and the more straight-laced and conventional parents of some of his chums had to keep a keen eye on him. One of his closest friends, if not his best friend, was Mike Macdonald, son of Nancy and Dwight. No one would call the Macdonalds straight-laced; they tolerated a lot, but there was an unbending moral core inside them, as in Wilson père, that could detect fraud and hypocrisy like a Geiger counter. And mischief ever lurked beneath the surface, ready to disturb the comfortable and self-satisfied.

Peppered through this memoir are scenes and faces of yesterday's Cape Cod. We hear about nude bathing and we hear about how princely Jack Phillips brought in those surplus prefabs of World War II vintage for dwellings along the ponds. It was an idyllic environment in so many ways. It was an upper-class Bohemia for the discriminating and mostly talented and those who could pass under the radar. The door was open to the liberated, and the size of your wallet didn't matter. Then there was nature and there was seclusion. Then there was all that drinking and carrying on, and everyone had a great time until they didn't.

Europeans made their way into the enclave. Reuel writes affectionately of his stepmother, Elena, of the Mumm champagne family, the last of Wilson's wives. In keeping with the custom of the country, she and a grown-up Reuel once went

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skinny-dipping in a fresh water pond by moonlight, he tells us. Unfortunately, he gives only a brief line to Vladimir Nabokov who was in Wilson and McCarthy's charmed circle for awhile. It might be asking too much, but a lot of us would have liked to hear more about his contretemps with Wilson over Russian usage, not to mention Wilson's disdain for *Lolita*, which McCarthy praised. You can't have everything, I guess.

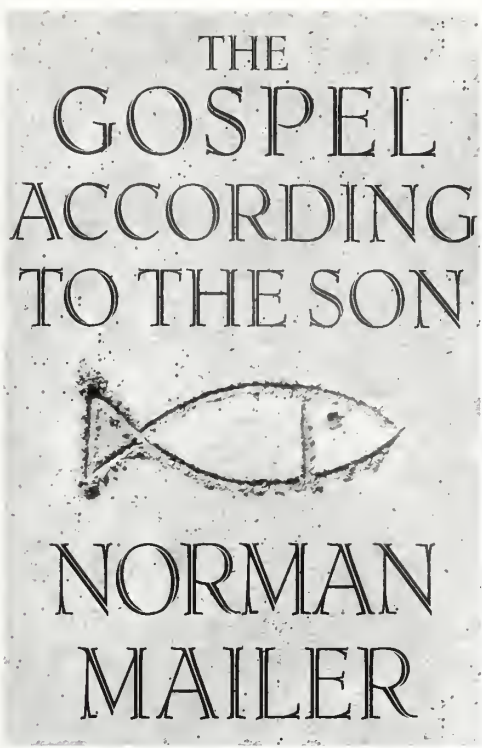
Those who have been bowled over by the towering eminence of Wilson, and I am one, are not that numerous it seems. He is neglected, I fear, in universities (too popular in his time, he wrote journalism for the *New Yorker*). At Columbia I once asked my class in Literary Non-Fiction who had heard of Edmund Wilson. Not one hand went up. Imagine. Our foremost man of letters. But then it may say more about universities these days. After all, I had a Harvard graduate in a class who had never heard of Henry Adams.

For the offspring of the luminaries of Wellfleet, the road may not have always been smooth. Much to compete against, many high standards to attain. Then, too, they must digest intimate facts of their parents' lives when they become public. Wilson's copious journals of his daily life from the '20s through the '60s, a great boon to literary lore, leaves little out. In fact, I think I know more about Edmund Wilson than I do about myself. Among those who have felt his worth was Fred Exley, author of the classic *A Fan's Notes*. In *Pages from a Cold Island* he writes about camping out near Talcottville in the hopes of meeting his idol. He doesn't, but meets Rosalind, Wilson's daughter, who is protective of her father and wary. He couldn't crash past the gate.

Full disclosure: I was a good friend of Rosalind's for a short while. And once I was invited to visit the Stone House one long summer weekend, and, mercifully for me, the master was away. I don't know what I would have said. But I felt his presence. It was everywhere. There were his walking sticks in the hallway, there was a straw hat on a peg, and there was the poem Stephen Spender wrote by the edge of a diamond on a windowpane. I marveled at the copies of *Blackwood's* magazine, an English literary publication that my mother down in Tennessee had subscribed to. Rosalind swam in an ice-cold stream, she gave me a tour of the neighborhood, she invited neighbors and a relative or two in for dinner, and she couldn't have been more hospitable—but the feeling I got was that she wanted her own life to be recognized and never one lived in reflected glow. Something told me not to broach questions about her old man, and I didn't. Later she wrote *Near the Magician: A Memoir of My Father, Edmund Wilson* that answered much.

Her half brother Reuel has now given us a splendid picture of what it was like to be his son. It is a joy to read on all counts.

JOHN BOWERS has authored seven books. His new novel, *Love in Tennessee*, is forthcoming from Red Hen Press in September.



The Gospel According to the Son

By Norman Mailer
Random House, 1998

On God: An Uncommon Conversation

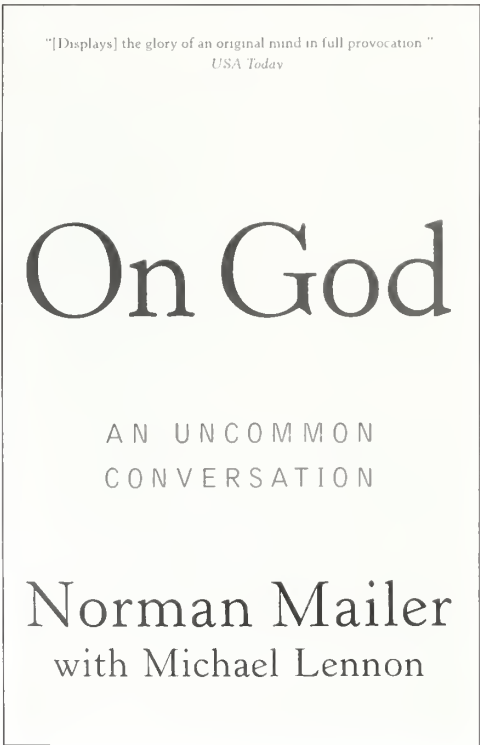
By Norman Mailer with Michael Lennon
Random House, 2007

Religious thinkers believe God bestows the gift of self-communication primarily through creation itself and secondarily through its interpretative prophets. For Christians, God's Son, Jesus Christ, is the quintessential prophet who dared to speak not about God but as God. As a contemporary prophet, Norman Mailer speaks about God in *On God: An Uncommon Conversation*, and as God in *The Gospel According to the Son*.

Mailer declares, "I feel no attachment, whatsoever, to organized religion. I see God, rather, as a Creator, as the greatest artist. I see human beings as His most developed artworks."

Norman Mailer observes that he is deficient in theological study, yet page after page proves his commanding knowledge of Scripture and its related works. His novel, enacting the character of Christ, which he discusses in his book-length conversation with his archivist and biographer J. Michael Lennon, depicts an angry, enraged grief-filled Jesus who grows in awareness of being God's son. His Christ is conflicted in his attempts to be all things to all people; he becomes bruised from crowds who endlessly poke him in their demand for a miracle. Throughout, his Christ receives special communication/knowledge from God the Father: "I did not see Him, nor did I feel His presence other than His voice (which was in my ear)."

As the prophetic voice of Jesus, Mailer's prophecy becomes an internalized imaginative meditation. Herein, one sees the influence of Gnos-



ticism and its claim to know the mysteries of the universe through a special intuitive knowledge. And, because of the individualistic nature of Gnosticism, its followers cared little for lasting organizations.

Mailer's extensive knowledge of philosophy, religions, heresies, modern developments, as well as their influence on his portrait of Christ, is evident. The Gnostic Gospels are a major influence. The Gospel of Mary can be seen as interpreting Jesus' teachings as a path to interior spiritual knowledge. The Gospel of Truth, a poetic, homily-like treatise detailing the rise of Error, in a personified female form (Mailer: "The Devil is another god and wishes to preempt the god who exists."), emphasizes knowledge as granting salvation and the nightmare of ignorance (Mailer: "The Devil adored Fundamentalism because it keeps people from thinking."). The Gospel of Judas displays the notion that Jesus spoke a secret revelation to Judas. And, especially, we see this influence in the Gospel of Thomas, which most likely predates the canonical Gospels—these are sources of additional sayings of Christ, offering salvation as personal and found through insight (Mailer: "I work on the notion that there's godliness within us and diabolism as well. So to bring forth what is within you, it is necessary very often, to send out the worst elements of yourself."). As seen in the recent eco-feminist Passion play *The Gospel of Judith Iscariot*, which proposes our doubts/fears about eternity, Mailer presents Jesus often as hesitant/fearful of his mission. As do the Dead Sea Scrolls, which include the epic *The War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness*. Mailer's "fundamental idea is that the cosmos is at war within itself and the God who created us is not the Emperor, but the Artist." Mailer also strongly acknowledges the existence and activity of the Devil in this interplay.

Rejecting atheism, Norman Mailer creates his own belief system where an artistic, non-omnipotent God desires every human being to be immensely

creative, where every soul is a gift from God, and where there are no absolute moral judgments. Mailer respectfully believes that one cannot presume to know the mind of God.

If biblical prophets debated the message God wished his people to hear, Mailer joins modern voices that have been equally active in redefining the message. The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., announced the "dream" that God wanted his people to experience racial equality. Archbishop Oscar Romero became a twentieth-century martyr because of his belief that God wished to give a voice to the poor of El Salvador. Mother Teresa of Calcutta and her sisters believed that God wished the most fragile of the human race to know that God does not abandon them. True prophets are witnesses to revealed

and tested truths. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, prophets believe God to be a Creator who is absolute, infinite, perfect, beyond measure, incomprehensible, and totally transcendent of all creation. Their witness attempts to give meaning to God's actions and place in our lives.

Despite Mailer's disagreements with mainstream organized religion/doctrine, as a literary prophet he takes the reader on an intellectual, philosophical, mystical, theological journey to comprehend the divine. Using logic, Mailer substantiates his claims by citing Saint Thomas Aquinas and by addressing his "basic" knowledge of God in what he terms "The Authority of the Senses." Precisely here, Mailer brilliantly exhibits the practice of Intertextuality: every text is under the jurisdiction of other discourses. That is the "context" of any particular text. One text is mediated or filtered through earlier texts. The New Testament quotes passages from the Old Testament. The "Authority of the Senses" arises from the Gnostic precept: "Look into yourself and you will find within yourself what will save you."

Knowledge is a process, the discovery of knowing. The existential knowledge of Søren Kierkegaard, who emphasized that every person must be responsible and ever ready to stand alone before God without benefit of social, ecclesiastical protection, is another foundation for Mailer's emphasis on individuality and authenticity. Mailer praises Kierkegaard as "probably the most profound Christian." It is Kierkegaard's belief that, even though we are aware of our limitations and our impending death, what finally counts is our relationship with God, and this is mirrored in Mailer's statement that "We cannot kneel forever before the neon sign that purports to be God's mystery: Don't ask, just obey!" Like Friedrich Nietzsche, Mailer the prophet, as exhibited in his discussion of the Ten Commandments, desires to do away with externally imposed values. Rudolf Bultmann, who applied the philosophy of Heidegger to the New Testament, emphasized the faith and consciousness of each believer who has his own history, for the present derives from the past and brings about the future. These thoughts obviously influenced Mailer's proclamation: "What God might have been trying to tell me was, 'Get over this notion of good, right, proper. Because very often when you're moving in a direction you think improper, you might be helping Me more than when you're trying to be proper' . . . What I'm offering to people as an ethic is to have the honor to live with confusion. . . . Live with the knowledge . . . the certainty . . . the belief, the hope, and the faith, whatever you wish to call it—that there is a purpose to it all."

Amid this intellectual/spiritual tapestry, Mailer exquisitely weaves his perception that one's eyes—the windows of the soul—also play a major prophetic role. In *The Gospel According to the Son*, Jesus' knowledge of people often is based upon his observation of their eyes. Mailer writes that Jesus did not cure people with darkness in their eyes; Legion acknowledges that the eyes of Jesus have great Light; Judas' eyes were too full of fire—you could "not see into his heart." Similarly, Umberto Eco, in *The Name of the Rose*, wishes us to see "that a good Christian can sometimes learn also from the infi-

dels." Here, Mailer espouses beautiful reverence for the existential notion that we do not know our nature and find out about ourselves—as does Mailer's Jesus—as we proceed through this life. We become further acquainted with Mailer's Jesus through his verbal feast, which highlights Jesus' thoughts, words, actions, and senses: we taste "the sorrow of the grapes that had been crushed" and "smell the odor of the betrayal that was in the flowers."

A true prophet's words are timeless—as are the candid and tender thoughts that Mailer the prophet relates in his intense desire to know/learn about God, an intensity of purpose that illuminates many of Mailer's works. The fascinating idea that we are "all part of a spiritual laboratory" lingers in one's mind as does the convention floor in Mailer's *Miami and the Siege of Chicago*. An authentic prophet's voice can never be silenced; Mailer writes on prayer:

An immensely abused communication system . . . overwhelmingly present in human affairs. Whenever a prayer is offered that is lacking whole integrity, the Devil may know how to profit from such shoddy work. I can see exceptional cases where a prayer is so beautiful and comes out of such depth in a human and has such inner resonance that divine attention is paid. You don't have to be an educated person. Such prayer comes out of the depths of your experience and shows a hard-earned balance of perception and passion, of forgiveness and true human need.

A biblical prophet is one who speaks, acts, or writes under the extraordinary influence of God. Even though Mailer's works are open to endless discussion, one cannot help but see God's extraordinary influence on this extraordinary writer. In today's anti-faith culture, Mailer brazenly postulates, "Yet how much more life could be gained by the opposed belief that in company (at least some of the time) with the Creator, we can try to do the best of which we are capable, even to navigate the faith, the rapids, the rocks, and the unforeseen events of our ongoing experience."

There is a sacred love in Mailer's prophetic words on Last Judgment: "I think at the moment we die, we are the sum of all the good and bad we've done, all the courage and cowardice we've exercised. I do believe our final judgment is given by the form of our rebirth. The only divine judgment we receive is our placement in the next life."

The Gospel According to the Son and *On God: An Uncommon Conversation* (Mailer's final work) have not received major critical praise—but isn't that in keeping with the role of a true prophet? Need we be reminded that the words of Jeremiah the Prophet and Jesus never received a four-star review?

GERALD GURKA is a Roman Catholic priest in the Diocese of Scranton, Pennsylvania. He is also a playwright and director; a collection of his recent Passion plays, *Redemption*, has just been published (ScriptWorks Press, 2009).

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Final Report from Mailer's Desk: April 11, 2008

BY DWAYNE RAYMOND

Dwayne Raymond was Norman Mailer's editorial assistant, researcher, and kitchen confidant for the last five years, highly productive years, of his life. Raymond's memoir *Mornings with Mailer* is forthcoming in 2010 from HarperCollins. The following recollection, written at Mailer's desk after the two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning writer passed away, appeared in a slightly different version last year in the Provincetown Banner.

NORMAN'S HOUSE is empty now, so I stop by to check on it nearly every day. Some days, like this one, I settle into his rounded old wood chair to write, careful to not disturb anything on the desk. I take a breath, absorbing the aroma of books and dust and hint of number two pencil that still lingers in this attic.

Two days before Norman died last November, I came up here to let the curtains down so light could enter freely again. For years his weary eyes demanded that the broad windows be covered—the glare was too piercing for him to work. When I unhooked the fabric, I knew I'd made the right move.

Awestruck by the view that late afternoon, I placed a call to our friend Christina, who I knew was with Norman at Mt. Sinai, to inform her that I'd dropped the curtains to watch the sun set. She passed this on to Norman and told me later he seemed pleased I'd done this. I drove down to the city the next day to be with him once more.

From his chair now, while writing this, I can see all of Provincetown, Norman's town. The Pilgrim Monument, 252 feet of granite, stands like an unconcerned monarch against the gray sky. Beneath the tower a grab bag of wooden structures splay out from High Pole Hill down toward the harbor, indifferent to the sea they nearly touch. Four large gulls drift on the wind just outside the panes in suspended animation, passively tilting with grace on easy gusts. Norman would have liked the view.

The home is secure, but key elements are missing. Norman's old brick home now seems cheerless; an uncommon condition. During my four previous Aprils there were always human noises, human smells, and family moments unfolding within these walls. Now, even the letter carrier passes without stopping.

If Norman knew I was writing at his desk on my laptop he would likely suggest I change my ways and pick up a pen. I'm amused and irked at the tone of his voice in my head, so I say aloud to unhearing walls that writing with a pen was *your* method! I favor a laptop for work, although I do write many notes in longhand. Some things change, others do not.

Norman's desk, for instance, remains virtually untouched. It is strewn with index cards, just as he left it the last day he ambled up here in August. I rack my brain to nail down the exact date knowing it



DWAYNE RAYMOND AND NORMAN MAILER, 2006 PHOTO BY CHRISTINA PABST

might be of use to some future biographer, but I am unable to. Of course, even if I could pin down the answer I might be incorrect. It would be just like him to have kept his last journey up here a secret stint of work. I like to think perhaps it happened, but I'm doubtful. Nonetheless, he was sometimes sly, which was one of his more endearing traits. Another was his tendency toward disorder.

The three-by-five cards on his desk are white and green, yellow and pink, and blue and orange. I bought them for him years ago because he believed that a variety of colors might aid him to better harness ideas. This episode happened when he pushed hard to complete the book about Hitler that brought us together, *The Castle in the Forest*. He said he didn't want to chance losing a smidgeon of thought, a line of text—one color for an old character, another for a new scene.

Next to one of the small reading lamps on Norman's desk—there are two—is a tiny statuette of a soldier. His arms are crossed boldly, his right leg is planted on a drum, and his triangular black hat droops slightly on each side. He is wearing a green uniform with white pants, and a sword hangs from his left hip. The tiny cuffs of his jacket are red, and gold epaulets emphasize his importance. Without question he is more than a foot soldier; he is a colonel or higher and he maintains a steadfast watch over the desk. Behind him is an animal skull, one of a small canine. It constantly bugged me to look at the head and so I ignored it for five years. But now as I study its surface, I notice it looks bleached by the sun, a sun that until recently rarely shined on this desk. I assume it was brought to Norman by someone who carried it from an arid place as an offering to the Lit-

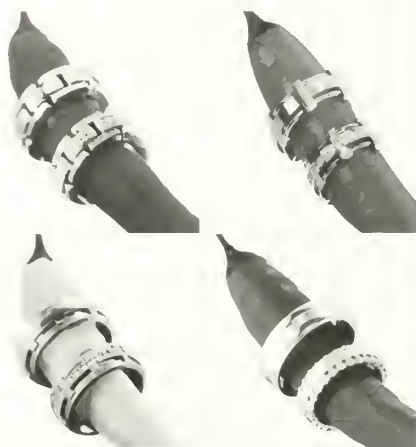
erary Lion—the imperious name journalists tagged to him. I reach over to touch the mouth of the dead dog: its teeth are still sharp. Near the skull is a small polished figurine of a rhinoceros. It has rubies for eyes and its stance suggests it may charge at any moment, but it has been in this pose for years—there is little chance that will happen. Like most everything in this attic, the rhino is frozen in time.

Books also clutter the desk. Several are reference books, such as the two German-English dictionaries, and the others are for assorted research. All are about Germany except for one, which is *The Routledge Dictionary of Latin Quotations*. Norman was interested in Latin and its influence on Hitler's lessons. He wanted to know everything about what Hitler might have studied by age sixteen. In my notebook I have written that Norman even asked me to investigate silent movies that the little dictator would have seen when he moved to Vienna in 1906. He was also curious as to what foods the boy would have eaten, what the cafés he visited were like, and which books by Karl May he would have read. Norman knew Hitler was enthralled by May's tales of the American Wild West. What Hitler likely didn't know was that Karl May never set foot in America beyond Buffalo, New York. I recall us sharing a good chuckle about that.

One of the wood trays I bought for Norman (to replace the plastic ones I'd purchased initially, which he detested) sits just to the left of my computer. It is stoked with files I compiled for him to peruse when he got the chance. The note I left on top of them reads: "Research for years 1906–1914. General." They are for the second volume of the Hitler book he never began beyond notes. To the left of those is an unabridged dictionary. It is six inches thick and

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the pages are worn. It is the same one Norman urged me to scour for words that might clarify the origin of our sounds. Specifically, words beginning with consonants. "S" is sexy, sensuous, and seductive. "M" is mournful, mundane, or manic. "K" is kipper, kooky, and kitsch—often amusing. "Q" is queer, questioning, and quilted with quiet as one's lips purse out to mimic an unheard whistle when forming it. The exercise was yet another of his quests for meaning that had no tidy end—like all worthy pursuits. Norman had many theories, not the least of which was that words are entrenched in us like primordial howls. He said once that he thought they were born out of noises for our needs "like the crave for love—or the grieve of its loss."

After I abandoned the project at his urging we never spoke about it again. I'm sorry we didn't because I now believe he was close to something remarkable with his rummage for sense in sounds. For starters, there are some "L" words echoing in my head and throughout this house now: they are Lost, Lamenting, Lonesome.

I know there are a million writers who would kill to sit where I am sitting as I write this, but I have paid a large price to be here. We spent so many hours up here working together and banking memories that I cannot now find them all. But I can balance that loss by touching his desk and magically hearing his gravelly greeting of, "Good morning, pal." Indeed, there is more to being here than merely

sensing his ghostly presence: his oils, his cells, melded with this old wood desk as he worked. He left a part of himself here, literally, as he struck the edge of it with his hand while he wrote, distilling the rhythm of his style.

I'm told this house is to become a writer's colony and this attic a small museum. If and when it happens, it's my hope that the legitimacy of what occurred up here is not mislaid in lieu of the legend. More than Norman's accomplishments should be celebrated in this literary outpost; the precision of his character should be lauded also. If not, then perhaps the untold millions of words he rutted from his core to elevate our minds may collapse into just so much dust on distant library shelves.

DWAYNE RAYMOND lives and writes in Provincetown. From early 2003 to the end of 2007, he was editorial aide to author Norman Mailer. Raymond has written for Boston's *The Mirror*, *In* *Newsweek*, and *The Boston Reader*. He wrote and was a producer for the NBC daytime news magazine show *Real Life*, and was a producer for MTV's *Real World*. He moved to Provincetown in 1998 to focus on writing, and several years later began doing research for Mailer. Raymond's memoir *Mornings with Mailer*, a recollection of his work and close friendship with the author, is being published by HarperCollins in January 2010.

The Seventh Annual Conference of

THE NORMAN MAILER SOCIETY

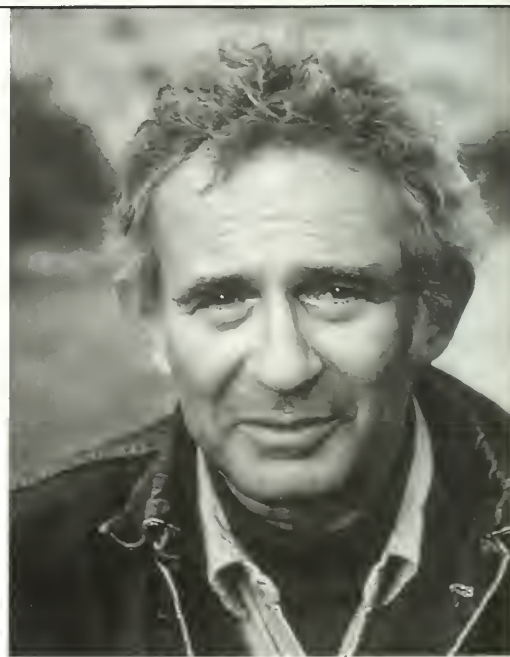
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The conference will be hosted by the Hon. Neil Abercrombie (D-Hawaii), a senior member of the House of Representatives and a member of The Mailer Society Executive Board. The conference will include panel discussions, films, papers and dramatic presentations focusing on Mailer's nonfiction political narratives and his 1991 novel, *Harlot's Ghost*. There will also be discussion of his path-breaking collection, *Advertisements for Myself*, published 50 years ago. Presentations will be made by Mr. Mailer's son, the actor, Stephen Mailer, and investigative reporter, Gus Russo. The Wilkes University MFA Program will again present a Readers Theatre.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: **Camille Paglia**, Professor at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, will give the keynote address on October 23. She is the author of several important books, including *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily*, a 1990 bestseller.

To join The Mailer Society and register for the conference, go to the Society's website: www.normanmailersociety.com.
For inquiries to David Light, Treasurer, at dlight@snet.net.



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The Hatch Cottage, Wellfleet. Designer, Jack Hall, 1960.
Photo by Jack Hall courtesy of Noa Hall



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Hammer & Cycle

BY RAYMOND ELMAN

IN 1999, ARCHITECT MARK HAMMER designed his first Outer Cape Cod home for writers Daniel and Rebecca Okrent. Since then his firm, Hammer Architects, has designed sixteen houses on the Cape, including six more houses for other members of the Outer Cape art community.

Mark has been coming to the Outer Cape since 1971, eventually buying a Deck house in 1996, in a fertile valley that dips down to an overgrown and disappearing kettle pond, just off Old County Road in Truro. Over the past twelve years, Mark has become more and more involved with local communities, serving on the Board of the Wellfleet Harbor Actors Theater (WHAT), and currently serving on the Truro Non-resident Taxpayers' Association (TNRTA) and as Vice President of Truro Center for the Arts at Castle Hill. I first met Mark, his wife, Ellen Kumata, and their son Julian on Ballston Beach around 1993, and our families have been close ever since.

Raymond Elman: When I moved to Truro in 1970, Charlie Zehnder had a reputation for being the "artists' architect." I am aware that Charlie built houses for a number of artists and writers in Truro, Provincetown, and Wellfleet including Nora Speyer and Sideo Fromboluti, Doug and Mary Heubler, Budd Hopkins and April Kingsley, Jackie Rothschild (a studio), and Paul Brodeur. Charlie also did a substantial redesign of my first house in Provincetown. Part of Charlie's reputation (or legend) was that he worked with the artists to design interesting spaces that were relatively inexpensive, among other things because he used materials that were (at the time) less expensive, like homosote, particleboard, and poured concrete for interior walls. When I consider the work you've done over the past ten years, it's possible that you've already designed more houses for people in the Outer Cape art community than Charlie. In addition to the Okrents' house, I know you've designed houses or additions for Dan Panalli and Tabitha Vevers, Vivian Bower and Larry Weinberg, Rick and Ellen Grossman. Any other people from the art community?

Mark Hammer: I did a house for Vicky Keith and Madeliene Abbing, who's a painter in Provincetown. I also designed a new house for Margaret Carroll, an art historian and professor at Wellesley College.

I hadn't thought about similarities between Zehnder's work and my work until you mentioned it, Ray. I never met Charlie Zehnder, but his work was likely influenced by a lot of the same things that inform my work. Zehnder was responding to similar stimulus. He was designing second homes in which people could enjoy their summers on the Cape, and some of the same considerations informed my designs, such as water views, natural ventilation, light, and a sense that the house should feel connected to and respectful of the natural landscape. As you well know, the Cape has fantastic light that doesn't exist elsewhere, and I want to be able to bring that element into a house. I think the people I work for, artists and others, are drawn to the beauty of the Cape in the same way that Charlie's clients were. They are people who are knowledgeable about art and architecture, and they understand how good design can enhance the way they live. So they are very open to experimenting.

Zehnder was also influenced by earlier designers like Breuer, Saltonstall, Saarinen, and Chermayeff. What those architects did was examine and change the core concept of the Cape house. I give a lecture that starts with a picture of a classic Cape. The Outer Cape is different than the rest of the Cape. Until the roads improved, it was mostly about farming, shipbuilding, fishing, whaling, and salt. It was a pretty hardscrabble life for a long

time, and there were periods of boom and bust. So the Outer Cape wasn't very heavily developed. There wasn't a tourist industry for a long time. The roads were bad and it didn't develop like other parts of the Cape closer to Hyannis, or, to some extent, the Islands. The classic Cape house is really a wonderful design, but it was a house that was designed to survive the winter. It's a house that was generally built in a protective hollow and turns in on itself. It's all about a central chimney and about having a kind of thickly layered shingled roof and walls.

When European émigrés came to the Outer Cape in the 1940s with ideas fresh from the Bauhaus and International Style movement, they were looking to create something different. They were looking for a way to celebrate the summer. They built houses on exposed sites along the bay, ocean, and the kettle ponds. It really was a total paradigm shift from building houses in which to survive the winter. But both types of houses are wonderful examples of architecture, because they both respond to their environments very well.

RE: Let's go back to your beginning and talk about the path that led you to the Outer Cape. When did you first feel like architecture might be a calling for you?

MH: I think I knew at a fairly young age, certainly

// We selected Mark because of his knowledge of the local environment and his love for Modernist architecture on the Outer Cape. He anticipated the challenges we faced and fully understood what it meant to build something appropriate within the National Seashore."

—Ellen and Richard Grossman



RICK AND ELLEN GROSSMAN HOUSE PHOTO BY BILL LYONS

in high school. I've always been interested in drawing, in design and how things were made, and how people envisioned things. I love airplane design, industrial design, car design, and I love buildings.

RE: What was your first stop after college?

MH: In 1970, I moved to Cambridge.

RE: Now you grew up on Long Island. You went to college in Kansas. What attracted you to Cambridge?

MH: There was a very vibrant architectural scene in Cambridge in the 1970s. There were some very, very influential firms there like the Architects Collaborative, Benjamin Thompson, the Cambridge Seven.

RE: What was your first job in Cambridge?

MH: I got a job with the Architects Collaborative (TAC). My first assignment was working on the AIA Building, the American Institute of Architects Building, in Washington, D.C., not too far from the White House and the Executive Office Building. That project had just come in over budget. I was given the job of taking an electric eraser and removing all the expensive stuff from the project, and redrafting it to eliminate the costly items.

RE: How long did you stay at TAC?

MH: I was there for five years, and worked on a number of institutional buildings and schools, such as the Quincy Elementary School in Chinatown, and Smith College in Northampton. It was at the Architects Collaborative that I was first introduced to modern residential design. Usually when we finished a project, the partner-in-charge would invite the whole team out for a party at their

house. The founding partners had developed a very unique residential community in Lexington called Six Moon Hill, where many of them lived. It was somewhat communal in the sense that none of the yards had fences. It had a central community space with a swimming pool and a common green area. I got to see houses that were nothing like anything I'd ever seen before, modern and glassy, and open to the outdoors, and full of interesting materials and building technologies that were developed right after World War II, like acrylic skylights and sliding glass doors.

RE: The interesting connection for me is that Lee and I owned a TAC house in a different area of Lexington. We had a similar situation where there was a community pool and green area, and my house included metal-clad windows, sliding glass doors, and acrylic skylights. In the house, we found a 1960s *Life* magazine article about the TAC houses of Lexington. What was the relationship between Walter Gropius and TAC?

MH: Gropius was one of the founding partners. He was head of the Architecture School at Harvard at the time. My understanding is the firm was really started by several of his students, who thought it would be a good idea to have an important mentor as a partner. They thought about Marcel Breuer, who was also teaching at Harvard at that time, but Gropius was really the primary theoretician and the spiritual light of GSD (Harvard Graduate School of Design).

RE: Did he have any direct influence on TAC other than being a figurehead?

MH: He designed a number of buildings. Unfortunately, he passed away about a year before I

joined the firm. So, everything I heard was either myth or history. But, yes, he was certainly very influential and designed a number of the early projects himself.

RE: So by the time that you joined the firm, how old was it?

MH: About twenty years old.

RE: I didn't realize it was that old. Did the firm include any other architects of Gropius's historic stature?

MH: No, but a number of the architects became pretty famous in their own right.

RE: Like?

MH: People such as John Harkness, Norman Fletcher, Sally Harkness, and Ben Thompson, but they were young kids when they started the firm. Ben Thompson is credited with being the inventor of the Festival Marketplace. He designed Faneuil Hall Marketplace (Quincy Market) in Boston, and other such projects in Baltimore, and South Street Seaport in New York. His work became the model for similar developments all over the country.

RE: We should also note that you met Jim Armstrong at TAC. Jim lives in the Miami area now, and designed a house in Truro that he uses as much as possible.

MH: Jim was actually my first direct report when I was at TAC. I met him my first day of work.

RE: What was your favorite project at TAC?

MH: I worked on two schools. First I worked on the Quincy Elementary School near the junction of Chinatown and the South End in Boston. It was

...ing project in that it linked three different communities, a Latino community, a Chinese community, and an Anglo community. So, it served three populations, and all the signs were done in three languages. There was a Community Center there and a Health Center. It was really much more than a school. And then, I did a smaller school, the Lincoln Park School in Somerville, which was also a terrific project.

RE: What did you do after TAC?

MH: After I left TAC, I went over to Cambridge Seven Associates, where I worked for about eight years. Cambridge Seven Associates is a firm that was started by some young architects who got together for a competition to design a new aquarium for Boston. And, they won the commission. The New England Aquarium was their first project.

RE: So, you worked on the aquarium?

MH: No, that was way before I joined the firm. I worked on the Porter Square Subway Station, on two buildings for Digital Equipment Corporation, a headquarters building for Genrad Corporation, and a number of projects at Williams College—the Alumni Center and Faculty Club addition, a Studio theater addition, and the new athletic facility.

I also worked on the Nautilus Memorial and U.S. Submarine Force Museum for the navy at the sub base in Groton, Connecticut, and the Cape Cod Canal Visitors Center for the Army Corps of Engineers. Unfortunately, the Cape Cod Canal Visitors Center was never built. The concept was to present the history of the canal.

RE: That's too bad. It could have been similar to the Hoover Dam Museum or the Pilgrim Monument Museum.

MH: The history is interesting, because a number of private enterprises, mostly railroads, tried to build the canal, but they all went bankrupt trying

to dig it. The canal was a major engineering feat, and finally the government stepped in and finished the project.

RE: What happened after Cambridge Seven?

MH: I left there in the early '80s, and went to work at Bruner Cott and Associates for about six years. And then, the economy hit another recession. Bruner Cott ran out of work and they went down to a skeleton crew of just the partners and a couple of draftsmen. At that point I decided that I was finally ready to start my own practice.

RE: What kind of work did you do in your own firm?

MH: We started doing residential and some commercial work. I continued doing work at Williams College, where I had built a good relationship with the Administration. After about five years, I bought my place in Truro, and to diversify my practice a bit, I decided it would be interesting to do some work on the Cape.

RE: What was your initial attraction to the tip of Cape Cod?

MH: I'd always spent weekends at the Cape. We had friends who rented houses, and we'd stay with them or we'd rent a place for a short period of time. Most of my long vacations were spent on the Vineyard. But when we thought about buying a house, the Cape was a much more reasonable proposition, especially for a place that we wanted to be able to use every weekend. We had friends who owned houses in Truro, so we looked for a house in Truro first.

RE: How much awareness did you have of the artistic and architectural history of the Cape?

MH: I was aware of the artistic history of the Outer Cape, but I was totally unaware of the architectural history, because it's not easily found.

It's hidden in the woods. However, the Outer Cape architectural history has been in the spotlight recently through an exhibition at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum, and through *Provincetown Arts* magazine.

RE: So the architectural history of the Outer Cape is not common knowledge amongst architects.

MH: Some Cape Cod buildings by Marcel Breuer and Serge Chermayeff, who are world renowned and had houses on the Cape, have been published.

RE: And what about Saarinen?

MH: The so-called "Saarinen House" is his wife Lily's house. It was designed by one of Saarinen's former employees, Olav Hammarstrom, whom I later worked with at TAC. I believe it was designed after the Saarinens were no longer together.

There was a link between Breuer, Chermayeff, and Saarinen that runs through Cranbrook Academy in Michigan, and the American Bauhaus in Chicago. These guys were not only architects, they were educators too—at Yale, Harvard, and other universities. They were all well known to one another and some were quite good friends.

RE: So I'm guessing that the connections between these architects in the Wellfleet Woods isn't something they teach in architectural school.

MH: No, I think it's something that's just becoming more widely known. I didn't discover it until I was driving down one of the back roads near the border of Truro and Wellfleet, and I saw a sign that said "Breuer." Then I went a little bit further, and I saw a sign that said "Saarinen." And I went a little bit further and saw a sign that said "Chermayeff." And, I thought, "Wow, something remarkable is going on here." I later discovered that around the kettle ponds in Wellfleet there was a substantial community of educators, artists, historians, writers, architects, and political people.

It was a bastion of left-wing politics, which some referred to it as "Red Alley" at one point.

RE: I read Reuel Wilson's memoir of growing up with Edmund Wilson and Mary McCarthy on the Outer Cape. He provides an interesting perspective on the intellectual firepower out in the Truro-Wellfleet woods in those days.

MH: Yes, bits and pieces have been written about it, but nobody has written the definitive book yet, as far as I know.

RE: So how many houses did those guys actually build out in the woods?

MH: Breuer built four houses. He built his own house. He built a house for the artist Gyorgy Kepes, who was a friend. He built the Stillman house on Chequessett Neck and the Barbara and Howard Wise house on Indian Neck, which is the best preserved.



JOHN BOWEN LARRY SHAINBERG HOUSE PHOTO BY MARK HAMMER

// The outcome was very different from what we thought we wanted. Mark turned us around radically by showing us very nice drawings of other concepts."

—Rebecca and Daniel Okrent



DANIEL AND BECKY OKRENT HOUSE PHOTO BY LANCE KEIMIG

Breuer actually planned a whole community in the woods. The sketches and designs that I've seen for the community were like Moon Hill—houses clustered together—but it never came to fruition.

Chermayeff has built about six or seven houses in the Wellfleet Woods. He did a big house for himself. He did the Doris and Herb Wexler house, and a house for Kirk Wilkinson. He did a house for Ed O'Connor, the author of *The Last Hurrah*. He also designed the *Cape Codder* newspaper offices in Orleans, which is now an engineer's office.

RE: That's where Chris Busa and I first pasted up *Provincetown Arts*.

MH: Really?

RE: Yes, before page-layout software was invented. Tony Kahn pasted up the magazine on the *Cape Codder* layout tables. There are some funny photos of Chris and I posing in the back of the *Cape Codder*, next to a delivery truck, holding a glass of champagne in one hand and the first edition of *Provincetown Arts* in the other.

Moving along, it is interesting to me that the first house you designed on Cape Cod was for Dan and Becky Okrent. Dan and Becky are very discerning people with strong tastes. I would like you to talk about the experience of building their house, because that was your quintessential house on the Cape that you use as a marker to show prospective clients and get people excited about your aesthetic. I remember looking at the 3-D model that you had created of the house, and thinking the house looked interesting. But when I saw the real house, I remember thinking, "This is so much more interesting than I imagined when I saw the model." I remember saying that to you, and you said, "Yeah, me too." And I thought that was really funny and honest of you. I think the house is particularly beautiful and very well pro-

portioned. It flows well and everything about it seems to work well, even though it's a relatively small footprint in today's world. So, I'm interested in hearing the evolution of the project. And what it was like working with people who are smart and visually sophisticated.

MH: It was a great experience working with Becky and Dan. It's easier to do a really good project with a sophisticated client who shares a concern for creating something special. We started that house with a very different image in mind. They showed me pictures of houses that appealed to them, which were much more cottage-like and more traditional for the Cape. That house really evolved in an interesting way, and I think the solution we developed responded to the Cape environment and the Okrents' location. The Okrent house has very few walls. It's a three bedroom house, but the master bedroom sits upstairs in a loft, which was initially separated with a wall, but is now only separated from the rest of the house by a balcony. The house is very much about the views, about fitting into its environment, and about blending into the landscape. Recently we completed a house on Indian Neck, across Blackfish Creek from the Okrent house. When I look back from the Indian Neck house, it's very hard to find the Okrent house in the landscape.

The Okrent house is largely about comfort. It's about having the breeze that's so prevalent on the Outer Cape flow through the house. It's about experiencing sunsets and changing light. It's about seeing the tides flow in and out, and getting a sense of the landscape from different perspectives. The Okrent house is a relatively small house, but in addition to the three bedrooms and the great room—living room, dining room, and kitchen—the design provides three distinct outdoor spaces. It has a big terrace, which is out in

the sun; a screened porch, which is something I try to provide in all of my houses; and an upstairs deck that's covered by a pergola with wisteria growing on it, so that it's shaded. So you can be outside and be in full sun, or totally covered, or partially shaded.

I once asked Dan where his favorite place was to take a nap, because I think that's one of the greatest pastimes in a summer house. And he said, "Well, I've got four or five places." I thought that was a great response—there are that many places that you can just curl up with a book and take a nap or fall asleep looking at the water.

The house is primarily about the views—it's very open on the back side. The state code in Massachusetts is very strict in terms of energy use. You have to provide a certain thermal equivalent for the envelope of the house, which essentially limits the amount of glass you can use. Wherever you put glass, you've got to balance it with insulated wall or roof. So I put solid walls on the street side, making the house quite private. When someone approaches the house, they don't really have a sense of its openness until they pass through the door, make a turn, and come out from under the balcony into the living room, where you gain a sense of its expansiveness.

RE: There are a few things on the Okrent house that I consider your signature. I can tell you what they are, but I'd rather have you guess what I consider your signatures.

MH: I guess you would consider my signatures to be the two-story space, the wall of glass, and maybe the screened porch and the pergola.

RE: For me, your signatures are the wall of glass, featuring fixed windows and awning windows; the use of galvanized metal of some sort; and the braided wire railings.

"We first met Mark when he and Ellen purchased one of Dan's photographs at DNA. Later, when we started thinking about hiring an architect, we thought, 'Well we know he's got good taste.' He was also open to the process being somewhat collaborative, which was important to us, but the overall concept was totally his creative vision."

—Tabitha Vevers
and Daniel Ranalli



TABITHA VEVERS AND DANIEL RANALLI HOUSE (PHOTO BY MARK HAMMER)

MH: I tend to use galvanized aluminum, or lead-coated copper in some cases, at the top of the exterior wall as it provides a soft visual transition to the sky.

RE: There are a lot of things that you do with interiors that I think are different from most architects. In the Okrent house you used bamboo flooring, and the lighting is somewhat unusual.

MH: Yes, we strive to do very creative things with lighting to differentiate spaces. Part of the house is post and beam construction, which is something we use frequently to define and give some modulation to the volumes.

RE: After building Outer Cape houses for the Okrents, and for John Hendrickson and Beth Jerant, your next challenge was connecting buildings and living/work spaces for Tabitha Vevers and Dan Ranalli. Tell me about that experience.

MH: I first met Dan and Tabitha when I purchased one of Dan's photographs at the DNA Gallery. We became friends and we started talking about their house. They came to me with a very specific problem. They were in two separate buildings, working and sleeping in one, while their living room, dining room, and kitchen were in another. This was acceptable some days of the year, but could be awful during cold or inclement weather. Dan is both an artist and an academic, and Tabitha devotes all of her time to her art, so they didn't have the flexibility to spend a lot of time in the house. They were looking forward to spending more time in the house during the winter months. They needed a house that was interconnected, comfortable, and comfortable. They had some preconceptions about how that could work, and we

played with those ideas for a while, but none of them were exactly right. One day I was sketching and came up with the idea that the addition between the two structures should act like a hinge. The addition would form the piece that the other two houses rotated off, and literally connect them as a door hinge does to its two leaves.

Once we arrived at the concept, we realized that the hinge should be different than the two existing buildings. One building was a converted garage. The other was a house designed to look like a conventional Cape house, although it was really very shallow and playful in that sense, but challenged in the way it was organized. So for the hinge, we came up with a form that was taller and more solid than either of the other buildings. The addition has a large glass window, which overlooks the garden, and allows light and air into the house. It also has a very high pyramidal roof that helps heat rise and escape through awning windows, allowing the house to breathe.

Most of the Cape houses we build are not air-conditioned, which saves a lot of energy. If a Cape house is designed right, oriented correctly, shaded, and takes advantage of the prevailing breezes, it can be comfortable, even on some of the hottest days.

RE: Let's talk about the Vivian Bower/Larry Shainberg house. What's interesting to me is that they had just built that house, but right away they knew something was wrong. So, again, how did you connect with them? And, how did they have the courage to change something that they had just built?

MH: I connected with Vivian and Larry through Dan and Tabitha.

RE: So, does that mean they'd already seen what you did for Dan and Tabitha?

MH: Yes. Dan and Tabitha recommended me to them, and they had a similar problem. In fact, they had a brand-new house that was similarly composed of two parts. Larry is a writer and Vivian is a visual artist, which also means that they had different perspectives on how they wanted to improve their house. For example, Larry wanted to be able to stay there in the winter, and found it uncomfortable to travel through an unheated space to get from his bedroom to his morning cup of coffee. Vivian wanted to bring a greater sense of balance into the way the space felt. As it turned out, the house just required order. It needed somebody to step back, look at the plan and find an organizing element. Most students in architecture schools learn that a design concept should be based on a diagram that tells the story of what the building is about. Often that's based on circulation, structure, or program. So we overlaid a circulation diagram on the plan of their house, created more effective and efficient circulation, thereby more clearly delineating the living room, kitchen, and dining areas. We also reorganized the kitchen in such a way that the house now feels like it has a sense of equilibrium that didn't exist before.

RE: Did you have any communication with the previous architect?

MH: No, I didn't. I think that person was trained as a carpenter and not as an architect. I should emphasize that the house was full of beautiful details. When you drove up to the house it looked great, but it wasn't right. It didn't have good bones.

RE: I know what you mean, because I have designed small elements for my own dwellings over the years, and I'm always aware that the things that I conceive are missing the element that a good architect brings to the table. Let's move along and talk about Rick and Ellen Grossman's house. Who was the architect of the house originally?

MH: The original architect was Henry Hebbeln, but the original house on the property was one of those U.S. Army barracks that Jack Phillips moved to the Wellfleet Woods following World War II. In the 1930s Phillips inherited approximately three hundred acres of land near the border of Wellfleet and Truro. During and after the war, Phillips invited a lot of people out to the Cape, and sold plots of land to friends like Chermayeff and Breuer. He also brought in former military barracks to use as cheap summerhouses, and there are stories of converted chicken coops and turkey coops that were initially used as houses out in the Wellfleet Woods.

RE: Paul and Blair Resika had a turkey house that I believe Paul used as a studio; and Charlie Jenks still owns a barracks, as far as I know, that Marshall Smith used to rent in the summers. Did the Grossmans buy their property from Hayden Walling?

MH: The Grossmans bought their property from Odette Walling, Hayden's wife.

RE: Hayden was Rosamond Walling Tirana Corbett's brother. She was married to Rifat Tirana (an ambassador from Albania) and, later, to artist Ed Corbett. She was also George Gershwin's girlfriend at one point. Rosamond was my neighbor on Mayflower Heights, and she told me lots of colorful stories about her family and the Wellfleet Woods. The Wallings' parents, William English Walling and Anna Strunsky, were important social activists in the early twentieth century. Anna Strunsky was imprisoned by the tsar for revolutionary activity, and they were both among the founders of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (following the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire), and the NAACP. Hayden was a conscientious objector during World War II, and I believe that Jack Phillips was also. Walling, Phillips, and Jack Hall met on the Cape during the war and became lifelong friends. They often worked together on projects to create living space in the Wellfleet Woods.

MH: In the 1950s the Wallings hired Henry Hebbeln to do a very interesting Modernist butterfly-roofed addition to the barracks to expand it, and that provided the distinct character of the house the Grossmans purchased. The Grossmans didn't make any major changes to the house for some time. Their main issue with the house was the fact that they couldn't use it in the winter. They had to close up the house on Labor Day and go home, while many of their friends could stay longer.

Our project started as a plan to build a separate winterized guesthouse. We were going to leave the existing property just the way it was. But they soon realized that if they were going to invest money, it would be better to improve the house

that they already had, yet redefine it. The new addition, which takes the place of the original army barracks, is only slightly bigger in plan but provides them with a new master bedroom suite, a small living space, a home office, and an eat-in kitchen. The addition can be used as a stand-alone house during the colder months, but what it really did was expand the entire house. The footprint wasn't enlarged that much, but the house feels much, much bigger. It now provides outdoor spaces that it didn't have before, such as an expansive roof deck, which provides a different sense of connection to the outdoors.

The architectural problem was to knit together a twenty-first-century building with a mid-century, twentieth-century building that was built very thinly. The existing house was an uninsulated summer cottage, and had single-glazed windows. So the artistic and technical challenge for us was to make it all look like one composition—like the pieces belonged to one another. We did that through proportion, pattern, and repetition in the fenestration. We devised sunscreens that shade the windows from the summer sun, but also continue and link the two structures above an outdoor dining space. This literally knits together the old house and the new house.

RE: Was the original army barracks demolished?

MH: Yes.

RE: So you kept the butterfly-wing building more or less as is, and then made an addition with a similar aesthetic that felt like it belonged with the original building. Once again you were working with a couple that has a very strong aesthetic. They are both photographers. Ellen has provided leadership to a number of art organizations, including the Wellfleet Harbor Actors Theater and Snappy Dance Theater. She was President of the New England Society of Arts and Crafts for a long time. Rick was President of Photographic Resource Center, and owns a high-end furniture group. What was that collaboration like? You said earlier that the best results come when you have a good client who has a strong aesthetic. I know in some of the work that I do, when I incorporate ideas from outside myself, it gives me interesting challenges to deal with that weren't necessarily part of my original vision. Much of

the time, being collaborative ultimately elevates the whole project to a higher level.

MH: You're right. I think the Grossmans brought a lot of themselves to that project. We were a good team and worked together well, but I don't know if they had a sense of what this was going to look like when they started. Once again, the decisions we made were informed by the way they live, and the way they entertain, and the way they had used the house in the past. I had spent time there as a guest of theirs for dinner parties and for lunch, so I had a sense of how they passed through the house, used the kitchen, and used the outdoor dining terrace. We built on that experience in an interesting way. When I was at Cambridge Seven, there was a slogan they often used that may go back to the Bauhaus—"One plus one equals three." I think that's true for the Grossman house.

RAYMOND ELMAN started the Outer Cape Repertory Film Society in 1971, ran the To Be Coffeehouse from 1972–73, and served for many years on the board of directors of the Provincetown Art Association and Museum, the Provincetown Group Gallery, and the Wellfleet Harbor Actors Theater. He and Chris Busa cofounded Provincetown Arts in 1985. (Ray left the magazine in 1990, and in 1991 the magazine became a publication of the nonprofit Provincetown Arts Press.) His paintings have been widely exhibited and are included in numerous collections. His paintings of Stanley Kunitz and Alan Dugan are in the permanent collection of the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery.

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Architecture of the Cape Cod Summer

The Work of Polhemus Savery DaSilva

INTRODUCTION BY MICHAEL J. CROSBIE, PhD, AIA
IMAGES PUBLISHING, 2008

JOHN DASILVA is a fine architect and a fine person. I have written admiringly of his firm's buildings before, and I look forward to doing so again. But when offered the opportunity to review a new retrospective of their work, my first thought was of how to decline without seeming rude. Polhemus Savery DaSilva is a relatively young firm—the finished buildings presented in *Architecture of the Cape Cod Summer: The Work of Polhemus Savery DaSilva* span barely more than a decade—too young, I thought, to merit its own monograph. And in spite of having written a coffee-table book myself, I harbor a prejudice against the format. I have never found a way to comfortably read the bulky volumes, and the writing inside is seldom worth the effort. Skeptically, and mostly out of a sense of duty, I agreed to have a look. When the package arrived in the mail, I quickly realized that I had, indeed, put myself in a bind. But it was not the bind that I had expected. Rather than finessing an honest review or discretely bowing out, my challenge would be doing justice to both a beautifully made book and a body of work that turns out to be more than deserving of attention.

Twenty-five Polhemus Savery DaSilva projects, completed between 1996 and 2007, are detailed: twenty-two private homes or cottages, two public buildings, and one commercial project. Except for a few structures on Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket, all of the work here is on Cape Cod. More importantly, it is very much *of* Cape Cod. The buildings refer freely to the colonial-period Cape, the fishing shack, the Carpenter Gothic camp, the Shingle Style cottage—the styles of construction that make this peninsula one of America's most distinctive architectural places.

While the work moves freely through three centuries of local vernacular architecture, it seldom confines itself to a single historical moment. In the facade of the Cape Cod Museum of Art, stark white Greek columns frame Gothic arches of red cedar. The shorefront residence Sand Dollars segues from Georgian manor house to Shingle Style cottage to antique Cape, its sprawling composition unified by a skin of weathered cedar shingles and trim. But the architectural approach is more than mere eclecticism. It is based on a deep understanding of historical styles; of the details, and materials indigenous to the region, including the interconnected historical eras of the region. This means that each vernacular

quoted (as opposed to replicated) is rendered in a pleasing accent, serving a vibrant and forward-looking vision.

Polhemus Savery DaSilva is a design/build firm, which means that it acts as general contractor on all of its projects. This business model is not uncommon among builders, but architect-led construction companies are rare, and those with a pedigree as impressive as this one are rarer still. DaSilva, the firm's design principal, worked under the noted architects Robert Venturi and Cesar Pelli, as did his wife and frequent collaborator, architect Sharon McGinnis DaSilva, who is the firm's senior designer. Venturi's influence, in particular, shows in his protégés' output. Like Venturi's houses of the 1980s, these contemporary buildings mix styles, often in highly abstracted form. But the DaSilvas' appreciation for vernacular buildings seems both more deeply felt and more natural. Their use of ornamentation, while often as bold as Venturi's, is more refined, better integrated, and less ironic. Venturi's houses were essentially Modernist buildings in vernacular clothing, peppered here and there with Classical references. The DaSilvas' work goes further—into a studied development of the vernacular itself.

Every architect working today must contend with the conflicting claims of traditionalism and Modernism on the profession, and each school of thought presents its own hazards. The Modernist pioneer Le Corbusier famously called a house "a machine for living." And while Modernism has since discovered nature, it still prefers nature's drier aspects, aspiring to the rigor and clarity of crystals, the silent inevitability of geological formations. Those who adhere to Modernism in its purer forms work from within the safety of a clear set of aesthetic principles, but risk sacrificing emotional power for intellectual consistency. Traditionalism in architecture, which descends from both Classical humanism and folk ways of building, is a juicier, more emotional matter, but it lays its own traps. Traditionalists who play to mass-market tastes court artistic sloth and easily lapse into kitsch; those who pursue absolute historical correctness miss the chance to express anything significant about themselves, their clients, or their time. John DaSilva's work makes a strong case for a traditional architecture that respects the past without surrendering contemporary perspective, reflects

ABOVE: CANOPY ROOFS AND BRANCHING BRACKETS AT HOUSE ON HARPER'S ISLAND PHOTO BY BRIAN VANDEN BRINK



COTTAGE AT FULLING MILL BROOK: A CAREFULLY CONCEIVED WOODLAND GOTHIC
PHOTO BY BRIAN VANDEN BRINK



"FOG HOLLOW" (HOUSE ON PORT FORTUNE): PLAYFUL, BUT WITH A PRESENCE OUT OF SCALE WITH ITS SIZE PHOTO BY PAUL ROCHELEAU

the principle of evolution, and embraces emotion without losing its head.

If Modernism takes as its models machinery and geology, traditional architecture seeks inspiration in the biological world. In so doing, it both reflects and exploits cognitive shortcuts in the human brain that long predate architecture itself. After millennia of living in groups, hunting, and herding, human beings possess neural circuitry highly attuned to facial features and animal shapes, and we interact with architecture in part by subconsciously recognizing in it patterns that resemble these preferred forms. DaSilva is well aware of the phenomenon. Most traditional buildings, he notes, contain certain mammalian parallels. "Sometimes there are faces," he says, "sometimes heads and tails or arms that embrace space." That underlying principle holds even when the work strays from the path of identifiable historical styles, as in the firm's House on Harper's Island. With its canopy-like roofs and branching eave brackets, it looks like a creature that has evolved structural adaptations to its wooded island environment.

Mammals are distinguished by a capacity for play, and DaSilva's buildings unexpectedly bend or warp spaces and create visual puns, such as a floating children's loft in the shape of a boat hull in his house on Champlain's Bluff. Often, the buildings explore scale. Oversize details—like the flattened Gothic tracery in the screened gable of the DaSilvas' own Cottage at Fulling Mill Brook—enlarge the visual volume of small buildings. Tiny windows toy with our sense of perspective, seeming more distant because of their unexpected size. At first glance, the entry facade of Fog Hollow looks

like that of a handsome but typical gambrel cottage. Look a bit longer, though, and that impression begins to slide. Gradually we detect that the entry porch columns and the skirted roof above are deliberately oversized, giving the building a presence in excess of its actual size. Round the corner and a pair of extravagantly buxom porch-roof brackets—a DaSilva trademark—give the game away, but by then we are already in on the joke. Such gambits are amusing, but they serve a deeper purpose as well. If buildings are machines, these are machines engineered to delight.

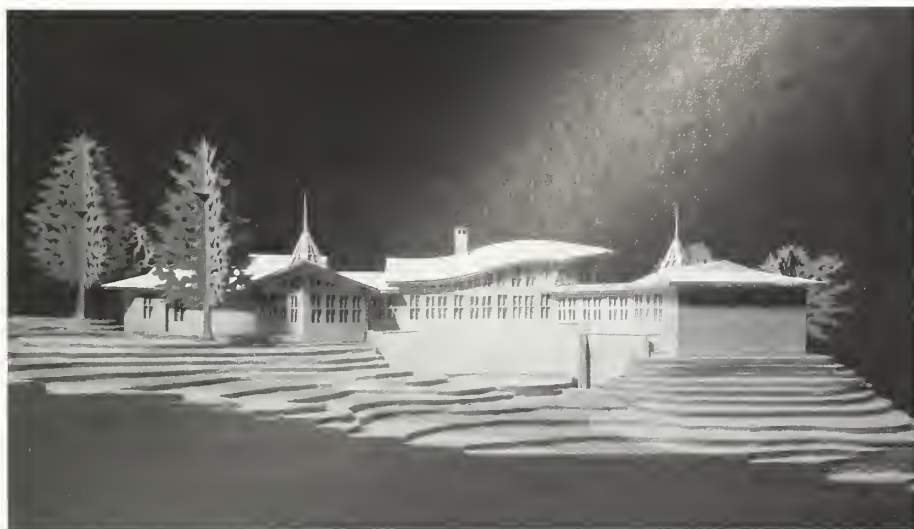
The effort is not uniformly successful, of course. The richness of texture and detail that animates the firm's smaller projects can be overwhelming when applied to the broad canvas of its largest. Sand Dollars, in particular, is too much house to consume at a single sitting. But when they err, they do so out of an excess of enthusiasm. Since we find that no flaw in precocious children, perhaps we can forgive it in buildings as well. In any case, the strength of the work here more than balances any weakness of that kind, especially in light of the narrow time frame during which this effort poured out.

The architects have been astute in engaging first-rate photographers to document their finished projects, and those images are reproduced handsomely on heavy paper. Architectural drawings, supplemented occasionally with snapshots of anonymous buildings that influenced the work, clarify both the buildings themselves as well as the process of their design. Michael J. Crosbie, chairman of the Architecture Department at the University of Hartford and among the more prolific writers in the field, contributed the text, which complements the visuals in a way that is rare in coffee-table books. Crosbie's introduction places the firm's oeuvre in the context of Cape Cod's physical and cultural environments; his discussion of the buildings provides historical background and analysis without wasting words on description, a job he wisely leaves to the photographers. The latter is a discipline other architectural writers would do well to learn, and it makes this book unusual among its type.

Perhaps the biggest surprise in *Architecture of the Cape Cod Summer* is John DaSilva's thoughtful and elegantly written essay on his design philosophy. An architect so adept in visual and spatial expression

may be forgiven for falling short as a writer. But DaSilva gives up none of his fluency in shifting to the written word. He is one of the few practitioners of his trade to be truly bilingual in this regard, and his essay does a far better job than I have done here. It comes in a book that may be more comfortably read at the desk than on the lap, but that small compromise is well worth the effort.

BRUCE D. SNIDER is a senior editor at Custom Home magazine.



ANTHROPOMORPHIC FORMS—ENGINEERED TO DELIGHT—IN A PROPOSED HOUSE FOR A PROVINCETOWN HILLTOP
PHOTO BY DAVID SPENCER



The Fragmented Culture of Film

BY HOWARD KARREN

SOME FELLOW COLUMBIA film-school grads and I get together annually and vote for our own version of the Oscars, and for 2008, we chose *The Edge of Heaven*, a German-Turkish feature by Fatih Akin, for Best Picture, as well as Best Director, Best Screenplay, and Best Supporting Actress (Hanna Schygulla, an aging Fassbinder heroine). Voting on our own awards is great fun, and I don't get to see this group often, as we have scattered geographically. Most of us screen scores of movies a year, both wide and limited releases, and it's only in the rarefied atmosphere of our own company that we can freely argue and celebrate the cinematic highlights of the year, which so few people actually get to see or want to talk about.

Of course, passionate, compulsive moviegoing didn't used to be the exclusive province of buffs and academics. Most Americans of the baby-boomer generation (like me) grew up watching older movies on TV to supplement what we saw in the theaters. It was a way of reclaiming for ourselves what our parents saw when they were young; we could effortlessly absorb decades of Hollywood history, and it didn't feel like taking a class. Today, despite the reach of DVD libraries and cable channels, the young moviegoing audience has virtually no sense of cinema history. But the generational changes go deeper.

The theatrical moviegoing experience is no longer the common currency of pop culture. Growing up in the postwar boomer years, kids were typically obsessed with music and movies and television, all to varying degrees. It was what you talked about and how you made friends. Today, movies and television are but two small parts of a vast spectrum of visual media. Multitudinous formats vie for a youthful constituency, everything from video games to satirical YouTube clips. Movies are just an aging dinosaur of an art form, explosive and imperious, its borders eaten away by pirates and hackers and the ever-shrinking and ever-more-portable screens on which its disembodied fragments are viewed. It's true that ticket sales have more or less plateaued for several decades, but in proportion to the growing population, the pervasive experience of watching movies in theaters has rapidly declined.

In Provincetown, a community with a first-class art museum, there is not one functioning movie theater, and even the local video store is struggling. The fourplex in Wellfleet plays major studio fare with substandard projection and sound. The selection in more urban areas is certainly superior, but even as the diversity of offerings increases, the audience continues to shrink. If there have always been film buffs—crazed enthusiasts of the medium—there was

also once a mass of movie lovers that spanned the divisions of urban and rural, highbrow and lowbrow, art and entertainment. And that mass has evaporated. The closed, small-town movie house in Peter Bogdanovich's *The Last Picture Show* is no longer just a metaphor of loss—it's a fact.

The process of turnover from one dominant pop medium to another is not a new phenomenon; since the beginning of the twentieth century, the theater was first overtaken by the movies, then the movies by television, and now television by video games and the Internet. What is new is the proliferation of choices. There is no dominant medium today; pop culture and great art can be found in music videos, in iPhone shorts, in cable series, in games on PlayStation 3. What's gone is an omnipresent culture that we all know (and sometimes hate) together. Anyone can find his or her own niche, yet no one can grasp what the culture, as a whole, adds up to. No singular, tyrannical apparatus, such as the Hollywood studio system, imposes a lowest common denominator on our collective taste. Pop culture is as pop as it ever was (or worse), but there are myr-

ABOVE: STILL FROM *THE EDGE OF HEAVEN*, WITH NURGÜL YESILÇAY (PLAYING A TURKISH MILITANT ACTIVIST) AND PATRYCIA ZIOLKOWSKA (AS HER GERMAN LOVER)
PHOTO © YASAMIN KIYISINDA

iad alternatives, fragmented as never before (except, perhaps, before there were mass media in the first place).

This fragmentation is true not only of the media landscape but, more specifically, of the movies themselves. Once upon a time, there was a two-way split between “movies” and “film” (as the hateful critic John Simon once codified it)—the former viewed for escape, as an excuse to chomp on popcorn, and the latter for enlightenment, as part of a passion for the art. When I was young, that split was between Hollywood and foreign films. The rise of the auteur theory in the sixties, the New Hollywood of the seventies, and the American independent movement of the eighties helped to change all that. Auteurists, beginning with the French critics of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, postulated that directors were the artists behind films, even when they didn’t write their own scripts, like such Hollywood directors of genre movies as John Ford and Alfred Hitchcock. And thus nominal B-movies, such as the John Wayne Western *The Searchers* or the horror flick *Psycho*, could be admired as serious films by serious artists. In the New Hollywood, directors usurped the power of studio heads and eventually ran amok (remember *Heaven’s Gate?*), and with the rise of the indies, low budgets and artistic expression became an end in itself. So that two-way split no longer applies. What’s more, world cinema, which was in deep decline in the face of Hollywood globalization, has now revived with a vengeance. Nations such as South Korea, Romania, Iran, and even the Philippines have developed thriving cinemas and emerging director-auteurs. In total, hundreds more movies are theatrically released today than once were, and many of them are outstanding, revolutionary, inspiring. Many of them are also amateurish and just plain bad. But in contrast to the moviegoing habit, what is happening to the movies themselves is, in both the traditional and colloquial sense of the word, awesome. A Hollywood blockbuster such as *The Dark Knight* can explicitly pursue complex philosophical themes, and a scrappy Bollywood fairy tale such as *Slumdog Millionaire* can win an Academy Award for Best Picture.

Which brings me back to *The Edge of Heaven*. Fatih Akin is a Turk living in Germany and is fluent in the languages, cultures, and cinematic traditions of both nations. His films (including the music documentary *Crossing the Bridge: The Sound of Istanbul* and the remarkable *Head-On*) are as much about cultural collision as he is the product of it. And they are extraordinary, if only people would see them. They’re available for rental on Netflix. Please check them out, and I’d love to know what you think.

HOWARD KARRER studied film and semiotics at Brown University and graduated from the film school at Columbia University’s School of the Arts; he reviews DVDs for the Provincetown Banner, and cohosts the FilmArt@PAAM film series at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum.



Reading the Red in Tennessee Williams (Courtesy of Jackson Pollock)

BY DAVID KAPLAN

“WORDS ARE A NET to catch beauty,” Tennessee Williams wrote in his teenaged poet’s notebook, and that impulse poured into his mature stagecraft. The singing musicality of his realistic-seeming dialogue, the aria-like monologues, the memorably beautiful phrases, even in his stage directions, are distinctive aspects of Williams’s virtuosity.

Williams’s use of color in his plays has a special beauty. Most obviously there are the colors described by characters in the play, often in moments of extremis: the Della Robbia blue of Blanche’s fantasy escape in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the seared white of Catherine’s vision in *Suddenly Last Summer*, a man’s silk shirt *colore di rose!* in *The Rose Tattoo*.

Williams’s control of color *seen* onstage is also masterful. In *The Day on Which a Man Dies*, begun in 1957 and completed in 1960, the progression of color specified by Williams organizes the meanings of every other aspect of the text: story, characters, behavior, and the anticlimactic structure of the play.

Williams asks that the performance begin with the title of the play projected in Japanese in crimson ideographs. Next, according to the stage directions, the title should appear in English, projected in a vividly contrasting color. The counterpoint of red and a contrasting color is the recurring motif of the next seventy-five minutes.

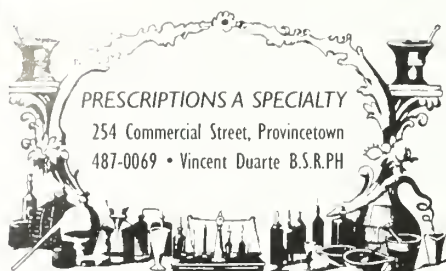
The action starts inside two identical hotel rooms, viewed side by side, like lobes of a brain. Stage right is spare, subdued in color. The other room, stage left, has been converted into a painter’s studio. Williams describes it:

... a room whose effect of violence and disorder, fearfully subjective, is expressed by great stretched canvasses stacked about the walls, all painted in primary colors in abstractions that seem to utter panicky cries.

The man, the artist, stands over a canvas stretched at his feet. He is holding a spray-gun with which the paint is applied to the canvas. He is

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breathing as heavily as if he had been in fierce physical combat with the demon inhabiting the canvas beneath.

Images of arteries, muscles, and bone have been painted on the artist's body.

After a few moments of staring down at the canvas, he sprays it with more red paint, then hurls the spray-gun away and falls to his knees, smearing the paint about the canvas with his fingers: the image fails him. He falls back on his haunches with a sick gasp in his throat.

The wet red paint smeared across the painted organs and bones necessarily evokes catastrophic injury.

Within the first minutes of performance, then, Williams presents the inspiration for this text: the art and death of the painter Jackson Pollock. The painter of *The Day on Which a Man Dies* is no direct portrait—but details are derived from the playwright's direct experience, gossip, and intuition about Pollock, whom Williams had known since they summered together in Provincetown in the 1940s. Pollock was killed in 1956 when he drove his car into a tree in East Hampton. Williams, who had done the same thing in Italy with the intent to kill himself, considered Pollock's death a suicide.

Artists and poets who defied convention in order to articulate ecstasy beyond convention, who had intoxicated visions, and who were doomed in their search yet kept searching, were central to Williams's romantic ideas of creation. In some way Williams was haunted by Pollock and other "inspirational" suicides—the American poets Hart Crane and Vachel Lindsay, and Williams's friend, the Japanese writer Yukio Mishima, to whom *The Day on Which a Man Dies* is dedicated.

In *Day*, red is associated with the Promethean impulses of the romantic artist; cool colors and cooler emotions provide a contrasting point of view in the conclusion of the performance. The red advances as the play progresses. The painter, in the process of creation, increasingly covers his body with paint, so that, to the eye, artwork and artist's body become one. Arguing with his mistress, drunk and enraged, he smashes a whiskey bottle, walks barefoot on the glass shards, and tracks bloody footprints across the floor. Bent beneath the force of his mistress's vicious insults, sobbing with his head in his painted hands, the artist's tear-stained face drips with red.

A truce, of sorts, is called, and Williams directs the painter, before visiting his mistress in the next room, to put on a black kimono and wear slippers. The practical effect is that the red of the painter's body exits—though not completely. The streaks and stains on the painter's face peek above the kimono's neckline. As the couple sits beside each other in silence, a branch of pale flowers is placed onto the stage between them (by a stagehand) as a symbol of reconciliation.

The "red rising disc of the sun" begins the next scene. The woman rises from bed, revealing that she, also, is painted. If a realistic excuse must be given, the paint from the artist's body would have rubbed off on her during the night's lovemaking.

The two get dressed. The dialogue establishes they are to have lunch in a fashionable part of town. There is no time for either to shower, and so it may be concluded they put their good clothes on over the dried red paint—as if they were camouflaging the night's bruises. In the original production in Chicago, the actor playing the painter washed his face and hands, so that in his suit he appeared without blemish—but the audience understood that beneath the suit his body was an open wound. Stage left, in plain sight of the neutral-colored room with its well-dressed sophisticates, the red-splattered studio lies waiting as an arena for further damage.

After the artist's mistress leaves for lunch, the painter discovers that she has betrayed him. Crushed in spirit, he crosses back into his studio. His natty suit seen against the red splatters establishes without words his alienation from the source of his creativity. What words there are

MAN: *Luck fails and the light goes out: no candles, no matches.*

What then?

The steady going along with each morning and a day and night?

No...

bear a direct relationship to *Macbeth's* act 5, scene 5:

*To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!*

The painter now kills himself. Williams specifies that at the moment of his death the artist's teeth have drawn blood: another outpouring of red.

The scene of the action shifts abruptly, as does the color. We are on the Ginza, the pretty confetti-colored shopping district of Tokyo. The mistress is having tea. She reflects on the shop signs:

WOMAN: *—These ideographs! . . . If they put me into an ideograph, I'd be a thing hanging naked, yes, a line-drawing in colored ink of a naked thing, outlines in cool color but hot color here—and here . . . [Her gloved hands touch her breasts and groin.]*

With this speech, the key to the color in the play has been articulated. It's Hans Hofmann's theories of hot and cold color, which Williams discusses in the novel *Moise and the World of Reason* (written in 1975). At his school in Provincetown, Hofmann taught that paintings have significance in the abstract relationship of their colors as much as in their subject matter. *Day* applies that lesson to the art of the stage. Williams, who wrote an essay about Hofmann in 1948, was friendly with several of the artist's students and models in Provincetown and New York. Incidentally, the artist's working nude in *Day* is taken from Hofmann's habit, not Pollock's.

On the Ginza the woman is, as she says, wearing a cool-colored suit. While she sips her tea, a second stagehand enters and stands beside the table with a large paper poppy, one last red image—a connection of the painter's wounds, his mouth, and his art.



ABOVE AND P. 129: THE ARTIST (STEVEN KEY) AT WORK, FROM THE ORIGINAL PRODUCTION OF *THE DAY ON WHICH A MAN DIES*, CHICAGO, FEBRUARY 2008 PHOTO BY JOHNNY KNIGHT

"I am moving into a little shanty in the dunes where I can avoid the summer crowds. I find this is a good place to work and think I will get a play off to you next week."

—Tennessee Williams in a 1944 letter from Provincetown to agent Audrey Wood

Tennessee Williams and Provincetown

Tennessee Williams first arrived in Provincetown in June of 1940 to prepare for his Broadway-bound play *Battle of Angels*. He was twenty-nine. His play would flop, but evolved over the years into *Orpheus Descending* and eventually the film titled *The Fugitive Kind*. Williams spent several summers in Provincetown that changed his life. From 1940 until 1947, this small town at the outer edge of Massachusetts was where Williams found himself artistically and fell unguardedly in love for the first time. He crafted his masterpieces, *The Glass Menagerie* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*, in Provincetown—sometimes on a wharf in the bay, sometimes in a shack on the dunes—along with jewel-like poetry, short stories, one-act and full-length plays.

Throughout these years Williams was intermittently revising versions of *A Chart of Anatomy*, a play that would later become *Summer and Smoke*, and eventually *Eccentricities of a Nightingale*. He dramatized his experience in Provincetown in a play titled *Parade*, or *Approaching the End of Summer*, a story reworked thirty-seven years later as *Something Cloudy, Something Clear*.

The Provincetown Tennessee Williams Theater Festival has added to this history. Well-known participants have included Olympia Dukakis, Eli Wallach and Anne Jackson, John Guare and Amiri Baraka, and this year, among others, Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright Lanford Wilson. The Festival has also hosted the world premieres of five Tennessee Williams plays: *The Parade*, *Sunburst*, *The Pronoun I*, *Green Eyes*, and *The Dog Enchanted by the Divine View*.

Just as in 1940, Provincetown remains on the edge of the water, far from the mainland, offering a clear-eyed perspective on Tennessee Williams's life and work. The spirit of discovery—of one's self and of the world—that the playwright tapped into in Provincetown continues on in his writing today.

— D.K.

Although the main character has died, the play goes on past its obvious climax. This is non-Western dramatic structure, and Williams subtitled his text "An Occidental Noh Play." Noh is a fourteenth-century Japanese theater form combining dance, music, storytelling, and enactment. *Day* uses a similar combination onstage. There is another reason for the subtitle: purpose. Simply put, if Western comedy intends to make audiences laugh, and Western tragedy intends to make audiences cry, the intent of Noh is to make audiences feel *yugen*—"still beauty." Williams achieves this effect with color.

The scene shifts again, and the color sequence progresses. A Japanese stagehand addresses the audience. He opens up the back wall in the stage right space to reveal "a morning sky, a white cloud drifting across it." After all that red, which fatigues the eye, the blue is welcome and restful. The appearance of the pure morning sky—and the reflex effect on the audience's eyes—is the *yugen* of the piece: still beauty onstage and in the audience.

The woman reenters the red-splashed studio to mourn the painter's crumpled body. By the conclusion of *Day* the interplay of red with a contrasting cool color parallels the contrast of a corpse with the eternal sky, and the contrast of the public expression of emotion with private contemplation.

The last idea is reinforced by the position of the actors' bodies. The mourning woman, aware she is to face an audience, adjusts her makeup in a mirror. The Japanese stagehand contemplates the sky with his back turned to the public.

The play was not produced during Williams's lifetime. Its vision of self-damnation led to Williams's next major play, *The Night of the Iguana*, where damnation is averted by the miracle of redemptive love. In the film adaptation of *Iguana*, the two stagehands from *Day* were translated into the pair of cabana boys shadowing Ava Gardner; the artist's bloody footsteps were given to Richard Burton. Williams rewrote the story of his Jackson Pollock-like painter for *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel*, yet *Day* shares not a single line with *Bar*—and more importantly there is no painting onstage and no suicide in *Bar*. Although Williams employed color in later plays, there is nothing so color-dependent as *The Day on Which a Man Dies*, where subject matter and form of expression fuse. The manuscript, cataloged as "finished" in Williams's handwriting, went unnoticed in a California library until 1991. It was first performed in February 2008 and published later that spring. A revival will be arriving in Provincetown at the end of September.

It is fitting that the text be seen now in East Hampton in conjunction with the Pollock-Krasner House and in Provincetown at the gallery of the Provincetown Art Association and Museum. It was in these two places—East Hampton and Provincetown—that this striking work's conception began.

DAVID KAPLAN is the curator and a cofounder of the Provincetown Tennessee Williams Festival and author of the book *Tennessee Williams in Provincetown*.



New York's Finest Jazz Ensemble

BY CHERYL KAIN

IT'S HARD BEING a cop in The Big Apple. Now imagine eighteen, full-time, sworn-in New York City police officers who comprise New York's Finest Jazz Ensemble.

After ten-hour days of varying shifts, when does the ensemble find time to rehearse? "Sometimes we have to get together at three in the morning, or whenever we all can find the time," says Tony Stewart, the group's musical director, who is a trumpeter, songwriter, and conductor. They practice as often as possible. Lieutenant Tony Giorgio, who has a Master's Degree in Music from C. W. Post College, is the commanding officer of the NYPD Ceremonial Unit. "He is a very, very busy man, but he is absolutely the glue that holds our program together," says Stewart.

In fact, many of the police officers who devote their "free time" to New York's Finest are music alumni. I wondered how one makes the leap from studying music in college to applying for work as an officer. Says Tony, "Many of us have music degrees. I wanted to be a police officer, so after graduation I figured I'd take the police academy test." Stewart earned a Bachelor of Arts in Music from Long Island University. He plays trumpet and piano; he's performed in pit bands on Broadway, including *How to Succeed in Business without Really Trying*, and as backup trumpet for the musical *42nd Street*.

The big band is proud of its charitable work as well as the performances for the children of the Make-A-Wish Foundation, the Ronald McDonald House, and the Schneider Children's Hospital. They have opened for Wynton Marsalis at "Jazz at Lincoln Center," and performed with The Police at Madison Square Garden, Wyclef Jean, Bette Midler, Marc Anthony, Cyndi Lauper, and Joe Piscopo.

They have high musical standards. Everyone has to be auditioned. Dedication is a must. "After working a long day, I'll ask to rehearse in the middle of the night to learn a few charts for a gig coming up. If their heart is in it, we take them," says Tony.

They've toured Tokyo, Canada, Hong Kong, China, and the States. Especially enriching are their performances at veterans' hospitals, children's hospitals, and nursing homes. They enjoy appearances at New York City public schools, teaching young people about jazz, where they have the bonus of busting police stereotypes. Folks can be anxious about approaching a police officer in uniform on the streets. It's easier if they have a trumpet in their hands, rather than a weapon. They become real people who love music, and Tony says, "People can walk up to us and shake our hands. When we teach kids about jazz—a truly American art form—their

faces and smiles and their dancing to our music warms our hearts."

The inspirational power of jazz should not be underestimated. Most officers are assigned to the patrol bureau; some work in the transit bureau, counterterrorism, aviation, highway patrol, or housing bureau. A few teach at the Police Academy. "Most of our band members have worked at Ground Zero," Tony says, "and when our vocalist sings 'America the Beautiful,' we swell with pride and humility. Each officer is also a friend."

This summer, August 14-16, the ensemble is performing at the Fifth Annual Provincetown Jazz Festival, the first big band to play at the Festival. The event also features musicians from the United States, Canada, UK, and Europe. Producer Bart Weisman will also lend a hand playing drums behind some of the unique and exciting acts. For more information, please visit www.provincetownjazzfestival.org.

CHERYL KAIN writes for numerous regional and national newspapers and magazines and is a jazz singer living on Cape Cod.

ABOVE: NEW YORK'S FINEST JAZZ ENSEMBLE
PHOTO COURTESY OF NEW YORK'S FINEST JAZZ ENSEMBLE

Bernard Greenhouse

Il Grande Maestro Musicale di Wellfleet

BY REVA BLAU

IF YOU WALK down my street, which cuts across a verdant marsh, you might see a flyer nailed to a tree. On second look, the paper does not have the benighted picture of a lost cat. Beneath the words “Cello Sonata No. 2 in G Minor, Op. 5,” the Italian takes wing with the breeze off the bay, “*Adagio sostenuto ed espressivo—Allegro molto più tosto presto.*” The Italian, of course, describes the tempo of the Beethoven sonata. Any coyote loping this turn in the trail to its watering hole would know that.

Adagio sostenuto, allegro molto, of course! Except we are in Wellfleet, not in Vienna, and we are an hour away from any concert hall, two hours away from a music school. In this New England town of painterly pleasures, it is hard to fathom that nestled in a pine grove forest, lives a great musician, the cellist Bernard Greenhouse, who continues in his nineties to transform the hallowed world of classical music.

In his basement today, a string quartet from Cambridge makes the ceiling reverberate with a collective down-bow in a powerful Brahms movement; upstairs, in the living room, Greenhouse listens to the fast fingering shifts of Ying-Jun Wei, a young woman from China, playing the allegro movement of the Beethoven sonata, the one publicized in the flyer. Living in Wellfleet, one might have no idea that this level of music study occurs here on both stories of a modern, upside-down house. But, luckily, the ever-knowledgeable staff of the wonderful Wellfleet Library has their collective ears to the ground. Tonight, out will come folding chairs, and a small concert featuring the young cellist with her mentor looking on will take place exactly in the spirit in which chamber music itself was born.

Greenhouse is a cellist who, after a twelve-year career as a soloist, made his profound mark on classical music as a founding member of the Beaux Arts Trio, with whom he played for thirty-two years. The trio, originally composed of Greenhouse, pianist Menahem Pressler, and violinist Daniel Guilet, played together over the course of fifty-three years, and went through four violinists after Guilet and two cellists after Greenhouse. They boast the longest run of any piano trio or chamber music group, perhaps of any ensemble. It remains today the most prominent piano trio ever. As novelist Nicholas Delbanco writes in *The Beaux Arts Trio: A Portrait*, “The history of the Beaux Arts Trio is more than coincidentally coeval with the rise of piano trios in our time, and to celebrate the one is to consider the other.”

While Greenhouse played in the trio, the *New York Times* called it “the leading piano trio in the world today.” Its recordings of the trio literature are still considered the bearer of the standard. The Beaux Arts Trio performed and recorded the trio

literature from its beginnings as three equal voices in Haydn and Mozart, through the fiery and elegiac Romantic period, and into the twentieth century with atonal melodies. The composers that they performed were the giants spanning two centuries: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Dvořák, Brahms, Shostakovich, and Rachmaninoff, to name the principals. The trio could easily transition from one to another in a single performance. The *New York Observer* recently called it “the most robust piano trio of all time.”

Throughout its half century, the ensemble distinguished itself in its adaptability as an ensemble as well as its expressivity of human emotion. The beauty of expression combined with an intense loyalty to the composer’s intent combined to create an experience of the music that has been described by the press as nothing less than “utopian” and “ideal.”

The piano trio just gave its finale concerts in New York City and at Tanglewood, drawing to a close more than a half century of history. In 1969, violinist Isidore Cohen replaced Daniel Guilet. In 1987, Greenhouse also retired and was replaced by cellist Peter Wiley. In June 1992, the trio made its debut with violinist Ida Kavafian in two performances of Beethoven’s Triple Concerto with the Orchestra of Leipzig under Maestro Kurt Masur. Violinist Young Uck Kim and cellist Antonio Meneses joined as new members in 1998. Kim was replaced by Daniel Hope a few years later.

And yet, despite all the superstardom of the younger generations, for the finale, there was special attention given to the original members of the trio, all three members of the Great Generation. In the year since the final concert at Tanglewood, Greenhouse’s musicianship has been honored on concert stages and in the press all over the world. My personal favorite is “A Master and His Cello,” a moving interview of Greenhouse by Joe Richman that was recorded in Wellfleet for *All Things Considered* on August 21. In listening to Greenhouse perform the “Song of the Birds,” a Catalan song that he plays to honor his teacher Pablo Casals, you will feel your skin shiver in the exact way that Greenhouse describes the *raison d’être* of his cello-playing.

From the same page, one can listen to several concerts by the Beaux Arts Trio: both the final concert in Tanglewood last summer, and a 1958 performance of Beethoven’s famous Trio in D, known as “The Ghost,” played by the little-known fledgling piano trio that called themselves “Beaux Arts.”

For the last few years, Greenhouse has stayed for longer periods in his house in Wellfleet, which means that we are treated locally to chamber music performed by his students. Greenhouse con-



BERNARD GREENHOUSE, MARCH 2009 PHOTO BY REVA BLAU

tinues a teaching practice that draws international students to his house. He coaches cellists primarily, though he also welcomes the other string instruments. He asks only that the musicians he invites help him clean the house and work hard and listen. “I ask no payment for my services,” he explains. “I only ask that they help out a little in the house. This is the way I can stay productive, to stay in the world of music. I decided awhile ago that through teaching, I stay active with the instrument and I am giving something back to it.”

I went to his house on two separate days that seemed typical, and on each day, Greenhouse had already practiced for an hour and a half the first thing in the morning; by noon, one musician was leaving, while another was warming up, allowing Greenhouse an hour for lunch and rest. Many of these students are busy studying at conservatories, and the time they spend with Greenhouse is their vacation week or a weekend. Perhaps every other

A Conversation with Bobby Wetherbee

BY ALICE D'ADDARIO

Bobby Wetherbee is the longest performing cabaret artist in Provincetown. He attracts an audience that returns each year at different times during the season, and some of them come in two or three nights in a row. Then there are those who "discover" him for the first time and become repeaters. Last summer he moved his three-hour show to the elegantly appointed Central House at the Crown, where, once again, he amazed me.

—A.D.

ALICE D'ADDARIO: How did you begin your love affair with the piano?

BOBBY WETHERBEE: My love affair continues after sixty-two years. I was born in a little town in New Hampshire, and I sat down at the piano at the age of three and played by ear with two hands. I'd give most of the credit for my ability to do this to the fact that I come from a very creative family. My mother was a radio and stage actress, my father was my connection to an instrument. He was a very, very talented man who played every instrument but the piano. He gave up his own creative dreams to raise a family of five children. I'm the third of the five, and we all played a musical instrument. I got my ear from my father and my flair from my mother. As a child I would wake up at three or four in the morning and I would play away. My mother claimed she could tell my mood from the music. We were always performing for family members. At the age of five I performed at local clubs such as the Rotary and Masons.

AD: What you do looks very natural, even easy. What formal training do you have?

BW: I started formal piano lessons at age six. I was able to sight-read and to play by ear, which was both a blessing and a curse, because I was able to fudge it. It made it impossible to get into a serious music school as a piano major when I finished high school. Although I flunked my audition to the New England Conservatory, I've had eighteen years of training in piano. At age eleven I was coached as to how to sing and how to "make it work." I also studied acting and dance—I was the song-and-dance kid, the obnoxious child. I studied acting because I was in summer stock and it came with the territory, although my mother frowned on musical theater because she was a serious actress. She did prime me for everything I've done, however, because she taught me how to "put it over." I turned professional, and through summer theater landed a job at the Equity Christmas party at the Hotel New Yorker at the age of twelve. What a time that was. I guess I had a stage mother. I just wish she had lived to see me live out her dream.

At eighteen, I broke away from home. I attended the New York Musical Theater Academy on Twenty-third Street and Second Avenue, which is no longer there. I studied with a man who was probably the finest acting teacher of the time, Sanford Meisner—a method teacher. I'd see Paul Newman, Joanne Woodward, Geraldine Fitzgerald, and Elly Stone, the original chanteuse from *Jacques Brel Is Alive and Well and Living in Paris*—incredible people. Finally, I did enter the New England Conservatory as a voice major. My father agreed to pay for this—a "real education." He had always feared for me and my ability to survive because I wanted to be a musician and had no interest in college. By the end of my sophomore year I was asked if I wanted to double major on the piano, but I said no because it was too much work. I read music well from the start so the voice part was easy. I received formal training about how to use the voice correctly, and to this day things kick in that I don't realize I have and I'm able to take it to another level.

Despite excellent formal training at the Conservatory, in 1977 my voice was shot and a friend encouraged me to study with Donna Roll, a Wagnerian opera singer. I wasn't sure she'd take me because she was a serious performer, but she said "a voice is a voice and has to be used correctly." What I learned from her is that the voice doesn't sing, the body sings. That's why if you're tired, you can't sing. She saved my voice. She made it easy for me. If I have a problem I still call her to get advice.

In regard to making it look natural, it is very natural. My mother said if it looks like work you're not doing it correctly. If it looks like work to the audience they're going to be

professional string quartet, quintet, or sextet who shows up to be coached in ensemble. When I asked him what his schedule was with Ying-Jun Wei, Greenhouse flashed a benevolent and mischievous smile, "It's entirely up to her. I follow her schedule. She is busy."

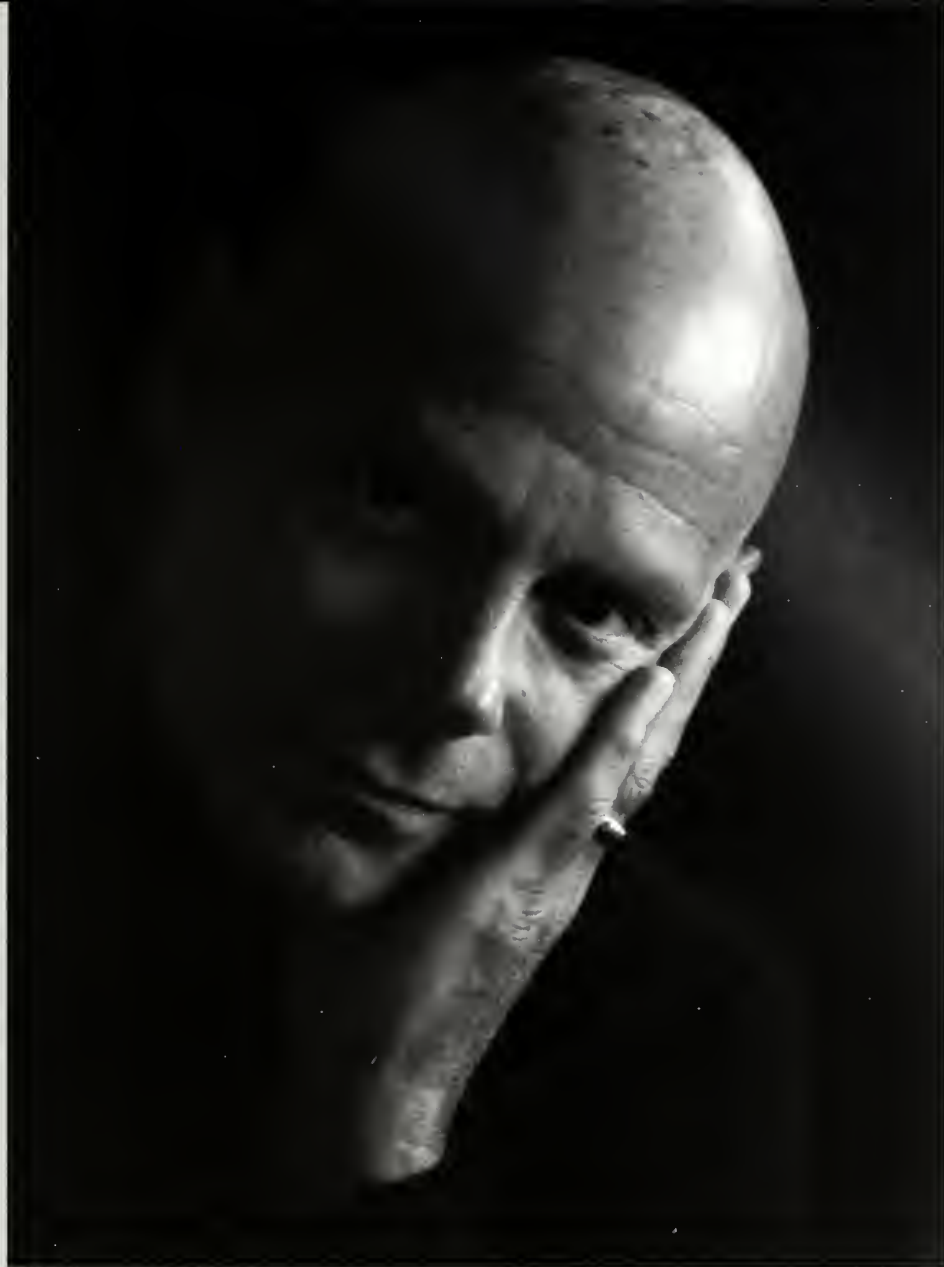
In return for a student's commitment, Greenhouse offers the wisdom of his ear and hours of listening and coaching to anyone, as he puts it, "willing to make the difficult journey to Wellfleet." His statement might need some explanation. While coming from Boston or New York might not count as difficult in 2009, some of his students who debark in the center of Wellfleet have begun the journey days before in the Far East, from Korea, China, or Japan. When they walk through Wellfleet town and up the circuitous path over the marsh and up Taylor Hill, they have been toting their cello case for several days. Ying-Jun Wei told me that when she first started lessons, her parents would put her and her cello on the backs of their bicycles in order to get her to her cello teacher, who lived forty-five minutes away.

Occasionally, there is a student who is still, in fact, a child because parents are starting children on cello at a younger age than ever before. Greenhouse attaches little importance to the language barrier nor does he seem to lower his standards for a student who is twelve. The importance for him is the quality of their playing and their commitment to it.

In an article in the *New York Times* in 1986, just one year before Greenhouse stepped back from the group, a music reviewer named Will Crutchfield wrote an article on the occasion of the trio playing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In fact, the trio played so often in New York that some of the same journalists covered the concerts year to year. In 1972, Allen Hughes describes the trio returning to the stage at Hunter College, "as regularly as birds fly south for the winter." In an interview with Delbanco recorded in the *Portrait*, Greenhouse talks about how he could recognize audience members taking their regular seats as he warmed up, although he had never met them off-stage.

In this particular article about the concert at the Metropolitan, the writer notes that "Menahem Pressler, Isidore Cohen and Bernard Greenhouse must have played the Haydn A major trio (XV:18) a hundred times, and the great Brahms B major a thousand." Then he continues, "The Beaux Arts is such a unit that one hardly thinks of singling out its members, but Mr. Greenhouse earned particular gratitude Thursday. He played portamento as though he meant it, and his strong, pronounced but gentle rallentando at the first cadence of the Brahms finale was something like ideal." To hear this Brahms movement again this summer from the quartet that is currently coaching with Greenhouse will be another reassurance that the things we love persevere. That can be heard in a small town like Wellfleet is nothing short of a miracle.

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BOBBY WETHERBEE PHOTO BY CHARLES FIELDS

uncomfortable and they're not going to enjoy it. Ironically, in order to keep it natural, I'm very programmed. People don't realize it, but I have to do my exercising at the gym. When I'm in the city I swim a lot. I have to have my two-hour nap. I have to eat at four in the afternoon when I'm performing. I don't eat lunch. I breathe steam before I go to work every night so the voice will open up. You can hear me doing voice exercises in the back room before I go on. What I have to do is really preparation for a full body workout. This routine is especially important when I play in Provincetown because the show lasts for over three hours.

AD: During your shows in Provincetown you always refer to your arrival here. Where else have you performed?

BW: People who've seen me perform only in Provincetown might be surprised to learn that I've worked in many different places and often have performed under much more formal circumstances. When I was in college in Boston, I worked all the bars in the combat zone. In the seventies, I was married and working in a seedy place in Revere, Massachusetts. I walked out on that job, which was a dangerous thing to do, because the place was owned by a low-end mafioso. My wife

suggested that I try working in a lounge in Boston; it was then that I connected with a wonderful man, Charles Sarkis. With the exception of Legal Seafood, he is the giant of restaurateurs; he used me for twenty years in many venues. My last big job in Boston—Boston doesn't really have venues for cabaret anymore—was at Copley Plaza in the Oak Room, a very beautiful setting. It was a wonderful four and a half years. I treasure that time because it was in the town I particularly associate myself with, with the exception of Provincetown.

In my fifties I connected with the Misquamicut Country Club in Westerly, Rhode Island. My work there gave me the opportunity to do what I do now in the winter, when I play in Palm Beach in several wealthy clubs—the Everglades, Bath and Tennis, the Gulf Stream, and the Lost Tree Club. Although it's a lot of pressure, I can work a week and then rest in Miami, which I do. I've worked at Barton Creek in Austin, Texas, and Spring Island, South Carolina—though I couldn't tell you where it is because they pick me up in Savannah and take me there by car, so I have no idea where I am. I've also played at many of the most well-known cabaret spots in Manhattan. I had a very long run at the beautiful King Cole Room at the St. Regis Hotel. It's in the Woody Allen movie

Radio Days. I lived at the St. Regis for four years with the chocolate on the pillow and the whole thing. The St. Regis was really a memorable-moment place. All of the glitterati went there. One night Elaine Stritch swept in, sat down, and said, "I'm going to sing that song," and she did. Billy Joel and Christie Brinkley were regulars and Stevie Wonder stayed there. He always made it a point to thank me. Prior to that in the seventies I worked at 666 Fifth Avenue, the Top of the Sixes. It was a little touristy but served as sort of my introduction to the New York City cabaret scene. After that I worked at the Colony on Madison Avenue, a very glamorous job, the place for the Jackie O. set and the Who's Who of New York café society. In 2005, I finally made it to the Carlyle and, well, where do you go from the Carlyle? You go back to Provincetown.

AD: How do audiences vary from place to place and how do these variations affect your show?

BW: I don't find much difference in the audiences and I thought I would. Audiences want to be involved, whether it's through recognition of the music being performed in a setting where they are not physically involved or in a place where they can participate. I have a good idea of the songs that I will perform before I go on. The only thing I know for sure, however, is what the first song will be and what the last song will be. What I perform in between is often determined by the audience and its responses. Occasionally I'll do something I had no intention of performing. When I took my first job in Boston's mainstream at a place on Boylston Street, Baroshi's (which changed its name to J.C. Hillary's and is now Abe and Louie's), it was a piano bar, a sing-along place. The difference between that job and what I do here in Provincetown is that instead of just doing a sing-along, I am in control. Mine is the predominant voice because I'm so loud. I always say they can hear me in Truro. I think that's why it's worked. I also capture the audience, even in the midst of their most enthusiastic participation, by dropping in a song that's a little less familiar, a song that they'll have to listen to. That way I can keep the show where I want it, or tone it down if necessary.

I worked at Pepe's in the nineties, a beautiful place. That's where you saw me for the first time. It was this luscious little lounge with overstuffed sofas and chairs and the view was to die for and the food was to die for. When I worked there I was the show, just me; it was small, intimate, and friendly. When I came to work for John Twomey (later to become the Landmark), I realized that on the strip, and I call it the Coney Island Strip, it wouldn't work as a show. Even now at the fabulous Central Bar and Grille at the Crown and Anchor the performance isn't a forty-five-minute show; it goes on for three-plus hours. In order to keep the audience occupied, interested, and having fun, the show has to be a modified sing-along. The audience has to be a part of it, it's got to be heard outside, it's got to be a fun, fun evening. And that's how it's spun around to how I began forty-five years ago at the Surf Club. I've come full circle, but that's only in the summer. As I said, in the winter I do a forty-five-minute show.

Q: What do you do when you begin to sense the audience is cold?

BW: Hermione Gingold once said you're as good as your audience. Maybe that's true for stage actors, but I totally disagree. As a cabaret performer I can work around an audience and find what makes them smile. I know which songs will generally get a particular response and the recognition of the music will help to capture them.

If someone comes in with a chip on his/her shoulder it's harder to do, and what I do is not everybody's cup of tea. I do the American Songbook. It's George Gershwin, Cole Porter, Irving Berlin (my favorite composer), Rodgers and Hart, Rodgers and Hammerstein, Noël Coward, Stephen Sondheim. Oddly enough, the younger people in the audience have heard the songs. They've heard them in elevators and malls and at the dentist—not the best places to hear them. I believe that the American Broadway Musical is the da Vinci of American musical culture. It was our unique contribution because all of the classics originated in other countries. I've always had a soft spot for American musicals because they represent a tribute to America. Over the years, I've learned the words and music to new musicals, not all American. I do Andrew Lloyd Webber and I know some people don't take him seriously, finding him too "obvious." Many of the same things were said about Mozart; the music was too pretty. Or about Monet; his paintings were too "easy" or "pleasing." But these artists resonate with people. I also do Jacques Brel. I've sometimes learned things that were popular at the time, but I don't do too much of that anymore because most of them don't last. I've introduced some country and western into the show. I like country western. I especially like the song "Crazy." In all I know about five thousand songs now and there's more to learn!

The recognition of the music helps to capture an audience, but some nights it's more difficult than others and the responses within a particular audience can vary. Just the other night I had a man in the audience who was practically defying me to entertain him, and by the end of the night he was almost in my lap. On another evening at the Copley Plaza, Mr. and Mrs. America sat in front of me. I don't think they said two words to each other all night but at about 11:30, I watched the man take the woman's hand and it just moves my heart to see what music can do. On a third occasion a very young man came in with his mother and sister, and after the show he stopped me in the parking lot and he said, "I want to thank you. It's the first time my mother has laughed since my brother was killed." And boy did that kill me. So, the power of music forces me to work with the audience. There are certain buttons that can be pushed, but I'm not going to spell them out because they're my secrets.

Q: In Provincetown you play to an extremely diverse audience, yet virtually everyone in the room is up feeling a personal connection to you. How do you achieve this effect?

BW: You're right about the audience. It goes from Cooper's people to regatta people. Last night I

had hippies in, and it's been long time since I played for hippies. I had to work around that. Then there's the typical summer vacation crowd, which is hardly typical at all! But, as I said before, I've been playing since I was a kid, first for a big family of all ages and personalities and for a wide variety of neighbors as well. We didn't have much money so we made our own recreation. Saturday night was performance night with five kids around the piano. We had to make everyone feel included. Music is about connecting and I've seen the most unlikely and most wonderful connections in my audience, young and old, men with women, women with women, men with men. I love watching my audience and that's the key to connection. I "see" the young boy who's nervous, the man who wants to be able to express emotion, the man or woman who wants warmth and affection and not just sex, the people who want to laugh, the couple that truly enjoys each other. I sense their individual needs and vulnerabilities and moods and I respond through music, not to exploit, but to communicate and uplift. The audience gets it and I think that's what forges my connection to its individual members.

AD: Clearly you have a wide selection of venues. What is it about Provincetown that keeps you coming back each year?

BW: I have a long history here. I can't imagine not knowing Provincetown. It makes you believe in the before-life and the after-life. I came here for the first time as a sophomore at the Conservatory for a summer job at the Surf Club. I accompanied two singers, John Kelly and Betty Wolf. They sang together, they sang apart, the bartender sang, and then they had me sing. I said to myself, "They're doing this with all these people; I can do this myself." And that's where my medleys started. I can tell you that, after forty years, I've worked every gin mill in this town. I get very sentimental—so many things here exert a visceral pull.

The light is spectacular. I'm sitting in my living room looking at the ocean, after what was called a hurricane, and it's breathtaking. Each day I marvel at the light. It can be raining, it can be snowing, it can be breezy, it can be foggy or sunny—it's like nowhere else on earth. No matter how cosmopolitan anyone claims to be, when we're here each of us becomes a small-town being. We answer to our name on the street. Someone walks in front of Town Hall or on the beach and they'll say, "Hi, Bobby," or whoever you are. The guesthouses provide that feeling, too. You get to know each other in the guesthouses as well as on the street or the beaches or at the bars. You'll greet someone you met the night before and try to remember how you met them. As corny as it sounds, we really do become small-townners here and it's because of the available connections. When my friend from Europe went back home, after having been here for the first time, he tried to explain what I'm describing to his friends. His friends kept saying it's like Zilt or Ibiza and he said, "No, I cannot explain what it is." They doubted him until they came themselves.

And the art colony is so important. Creative energy, dynamic and remarkable, surrounds you.

Even after all these years, I can walk these streets and make a turn down some alley or lane and see something I've never seen before. Everyone says it's changed—what hasn't? I'm glad it's changed because I've changed. Yet in its value system and regard for people and nature, there has been a comforting constancy.

AD: What else would you like us to know about you and your work?

BW: As I stated before, I'm very disciplined, very programmed. When I work, I try not to talk during the day. Once, Angela Lansbury was on Jack Parr and she was doing *Sweeney Todd* at the time, and he said how do you do it show in and show out. She said, "I don't talk all day because you can't." I pretty much do what she did. My voice teacher said, "You know you sing about an opera a night," because it's very concentrated, very fluid; it just goes and goes and goes. That's something that people marvel at. I don't really know why they marvel, except for my kidneys, because the show runs at least three hours. My mother once said to me, "You've got to be there so why not work." I find that when I take a break, because of the high energy I put out, it breaks the mood and I have to start all over again to get the audience back into high gear and to get myself back into high gear.

I write music. I've written since I was ten. I still write and probably always will. My very favorite song to sing is "That's a Lie," which I wrote when I was twelve.

I've never worked with a big tip jar because a big tip jar looks like you need the money (not that I don't!). I've always kept the tip jar very flat, very flush to the piano. I think those big things just interfere.

I know that maybe you're going to laugh, but people do not realize that I'm shy. I'm shy when meeting new people. It's usually with people who introduce themselves to me as opposed to my introducing myself to them. I sit on the beach alone unless I'm with my buddy. I'm really a loner in my off time. I hate telephones. I'm not really into computers.

I get nervous before I perform; there's still a little churning in my stomach no matter what venue I'm in. Once when I was a kid and refused to go on, my mother grabbed me by the scruff of the neck and said, "They really don't care if you want to go on. You're going on." That hesitancy still remains. Most people would think it's about acceptance, but it's really about respect for what I do and for my audience, and my responsibility to communicate.

It's a great profession and I'm a lucky guy to do solely what I love. There is still so much more to be done!

ALICE D'ADDARIO, a longtime admirer of Bobby Wetherbee, is a retired high school history department chair. She resides in New York City and summers in Wellfleet.



Bear Week

BY BILL CODA

THE SIMPLE BROWN AND GOLD T-shirt said it so eloquently: *Dip me in honey and feed me to the bears*. The bears had descended upon Provincetown, hungry for each other. The two constellations that swivel around the North Star, Ursa Major and Ursa Minor, are named for the great bear and little bear whose bulk and warm coats are suited for cold weather. But for the past ten years, thousands of “Provincetown Bears” have gathered in sunny July for the opportunity to bask in balmy weather for a weeklong celebration of hirsute men. They arrive from all over the world to express their God-given right to party without the scowling and judging of the young and hairless “twinks” and “circuit party” boys who occupied the town, during the prior week, for their own Fourth of July celebration. When ursa men, bearded, built, and hairy, flood Commercial Street, they are proud to exhibit their chests, backs, and other body parts to those who appreciate the beauty of a furry fellow.

The bear community is a subculture of gay men who embrace their body hair. Bears come in all colors, ages, and sizes. There is no specific, unique requirement for identifying as a bear. Cubs are younger bears; daddy bears are often older bears who enjoy the companionship of younger bears; polar bears sport white hair and beards. Leather bears

ABOVE: BEAR WEEK 2008 AT THE BOATSLIP, PROVINCETOWN, PICTURED FROM LEFT: DANNY MCCARRON, IGGY CRUZ, MATT CASEY, BILL CODA, DAVE MONTANARO, RAY STARNES, BILL SCHEETZ, JOE VISSAGIO PHOTO BY GLEN KOSS



Provincetown is filled with interesting shops, great restaurants, cabaret singers, comedy acts, plus lots of bar and street venues, all offering opportunities to socialize. Bear Week is sponsored by a group of local and Boston-based bears calling themselves the Provincetown Bears (www.ptownbears.org). They team with local vendors to ensure that the week offers something for everyone. The Boatslip and the Crown & Anchor are the "host" hotels for the week. The Boatslip is renowned for its hugely popular, daily summer T-Dance, held each afternoon from four to seven p.m. on a large deck overlooking the Provincetown harbor. After spending the day poolside or at the beach, gay men gather here to drink and dance to music old and new. The crowds are enormous. Since it is Bear Week, the throngs are predominately bears. I say a silent prayer that the deck will withstand the pressure.

Thursday has a "Classic Disco" theme, and the vibrating planking is packed with shirtless, hairy bodies gyrating to "It's Raining Men" and "So Many Men, So Little Time." Maneuvering through the wave of big bodies is an exercise unto itself. Balancing a beer between pulsating beats adds to the challenge. Some unsuspecting guests wander into the Boatslip. Obviously, they hadn't gotten the memo that it was Bear Week. In their pressed linen shirts and their capri pants, they look on in amazement at unleashed Dionysian delirium. The Village People's "YMCA" blasts through the speakers—and I never see the Ricky Martin look-alikes again.

Provincetown, where Tennessee Williams spent four passionate summers in the 1940s, loves theater, and Commercial Street bustles from late morning until the early hours of the next day. Following dinner, many bears head to an evening show or to their favorite bar. The Vault, the Atlantic House, Paramount, and Purgatory provide nighttime cruising fueled by dancing and alcohol. Quieter venues such as the Porch Bar, the Wave Bar, and the Wet Spot are alternatives for those who prefer a more serene evening—that is, unless you happen to hit the Wave Bar on its infamous Wednesday night karaoke. Scores of chorus bears, budding soloists, and groups of friends rise onto the stage to deliver their interpretation of a rock legend or country classic. "I've Got Friends in Low Places" is queued up as the next song selection as four bear cubs from Dallas hop up onto the stage. Catcalls and whistles incite the boys to take their shirts off. One keeps his cowboy hat on. The muscles of the cubs gleam in the flashing strobe lights, which pace and build the emotion into furious frenzy.

The evening winds down as one a.m. approaches. "Last call" is the swan song of a full day. Provincetown is not a late-night resort. But before sleep, partygoers head to the West End of Commercial Street for the traditional close to evening activities—pizza and ice cream at Spiritus, a Provincetown institution since 1971. For an hour, the line snakes out the door, spills into the street and completely blocks traffic, an unstoppable phenomenon that even the police resign themselves to. Slices, full pepperoni pies, and leaning towers of triple-decker ice-cream cones are made

at Olympic pace. If a date hasn't been lined up for the evening by now, it's one's last opportunity to hook up for the evening—or be relegated to the anonymous encounters in the dunes or at the notorious "Dick Dock" between the pilings and under the canopy of the Boatslip's deck. Not all bears are satiated by ice cream.

Merriment abounds during Bear Week, but there are options for more artistic, cerebral pursuits. The "Secret Garden" House Tour, sponsored by the Provincetown Art Association and Museum, is attended by horticultural bears and non-bears alike. Art galleries offer wine-and-cheese openings of their exhibitions. The Provincetown Public Library and the Masonic Lodge (which features an original charter from 1795, signed by Paul Revere) hold events. Jaunts to individual lighthouses are curiously meditative. The phallic aspirations of Pilgrim Monument are explored in a long climb of its series of ramps, where the view extends for twenty-five miles, farther than the reach of any lighthouse beacon. The Pilgrim Monument and Provincetown Museum is a 252-foot granite tower located in the center of town on High Pole Hill Road. Its cornerstone was placed in 1907 when President Theodore Roosevelt (the original Teddy Bear) visited to commemorate the Pilgrim's first landing in Provincetown in 1620. It took three years, and visits by two more presidents, to finish the erection, which was completed in 1910.

The Bear community also gives back to the town that welcomes them. Fundraisers benefit GLAD (Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders) and the Provincetown Firemen's Association, and they are usually sold out well in advance. The "Firemen's Ball" proceeds go to support the local Firemen's Association. One can spy hundreds of men lumbering down Commercial Street in all types of fire gear, demonstrating their support of the burly men who keep us from burning up. The event recently raised in excess of \$10,000.

As the week progresses, new friendships are formed, bonds tightened, and a great deal of food is consumed. Local restaurateurs are thrilled with the week's receipts. Coming right on the heels of circuit-party week, where the twinkies dine on water and a small salad, the proprietors welcome bears with open arms and big bear hugs. Three square meals a day, and several smaller snacks help the locals recoup their losses from the prior week.

With the week drawing to a close, many say their good-byes right on the street. Long, drawn-out hugs and wet sloppy kisses foretell that next year will be even bigger and better. As I pack the car and head toward the edge of town, I catch a glimpse of a handsome bear I'd spent some time with earlier in the week. His T-shirt put it all in a nutshell: "You had me at Woof."

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combine characteristics of both the bear and leather communities; muscle bears are often hyper-buffed; otters are skinny, sleek bears who seek out the bear community. Pocket bears tend to be short; panda bears are Asian; "behrs" are hairless, yet chase their hairy comrades. The distinctive bear type was originally thought of as a chubby, stocky fellow who tended to have a hairy body and facial hair. This self-identification of bears is thought to have originated in San Francisco in the late 1970s as an outgrowth of the biker, leather, and girth & mirth communities.

Special events now happen year-round to celebrate this masculine lifestyle. International Bear Rendezvous, Bear Pride, and Bear Bust are popular weekends for bears to come together and revel among themselves. However, Bear Week in Provincetown has taken this celebration to an entirely new level, perhaps because the town of Provincetown is such a welcoming tourist mecca for the entire LGBT community, providing the perfect environment—gorgeous beaches, vibrant nightlife, clean sweat, and a density of desire.

I'm greeted by a handsome man in his midforties with a solid build and full beard as I'm cycling toward the beach to meet up with other men who head to the far end of Herring Cove. "Woof, hot man," he whistles as I pedal past, flashing a friendly smile. "Meet me at the beach!" He'll be waiting in his tank top, which has the greeting "shit in the woods."



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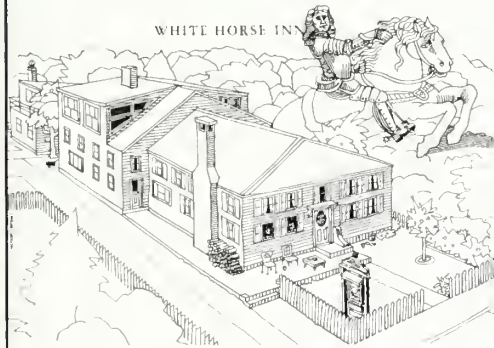
Deborah Dionne, Manager

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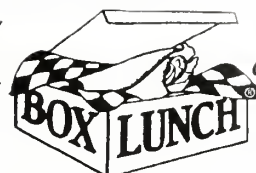
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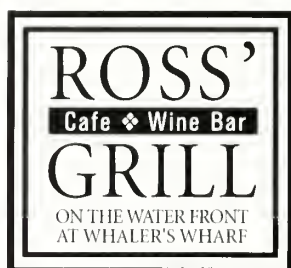
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EURO ISLAND GRILL &

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www.ptownlobsterpot.com

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NAPI'S 508.487.1145 Open year-round

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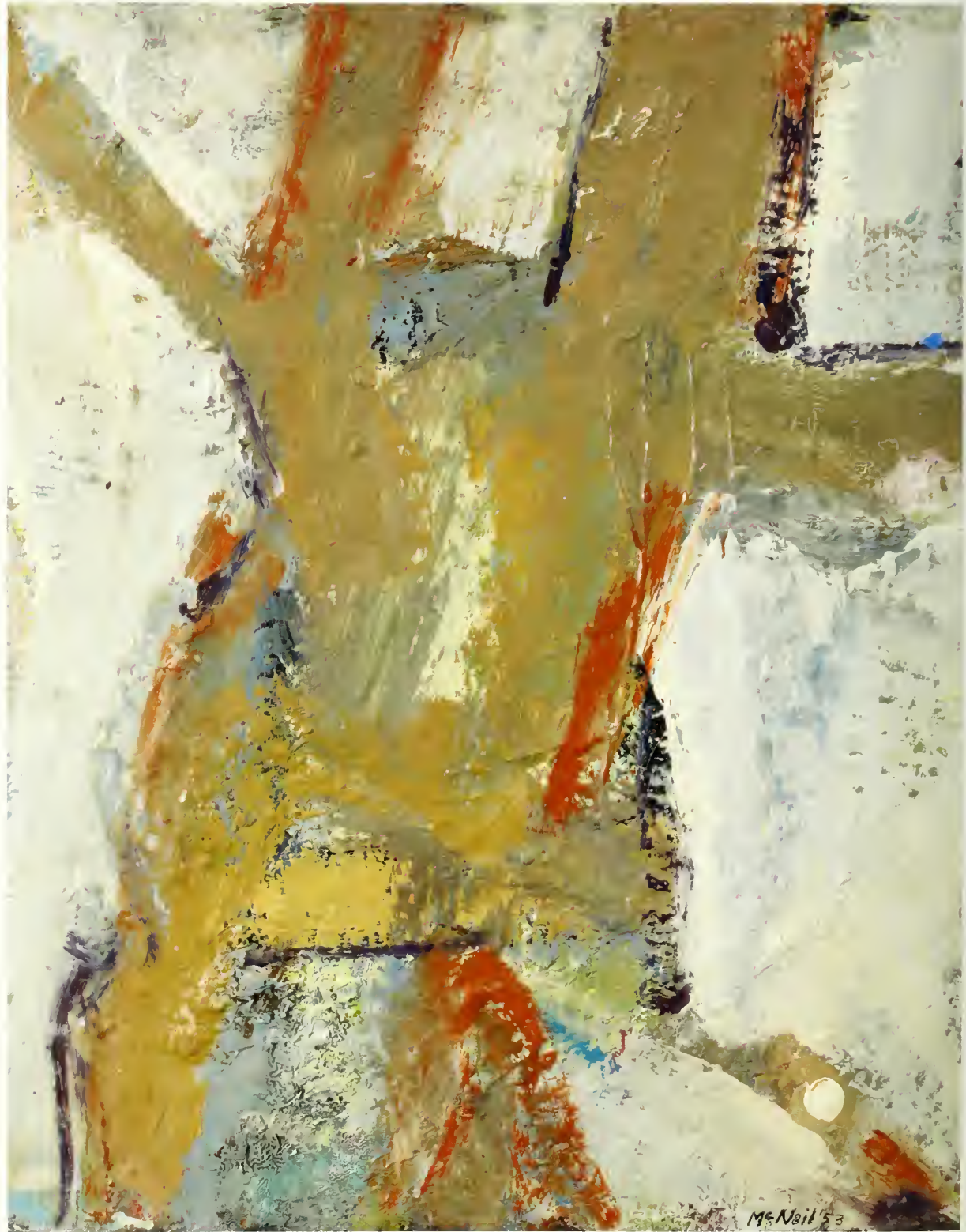
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Lillian Orlowsky
Stephen Pace
Myron Stout
Rosamond Tirana
George Yater
William Zorach



George McNeil, *Apotheosis*, 1953, oil on artist's board, 28 x 22"

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